

## Brill's Companion to George Grote and the Classical Tradition

# Brill's Companions to Classical Reception

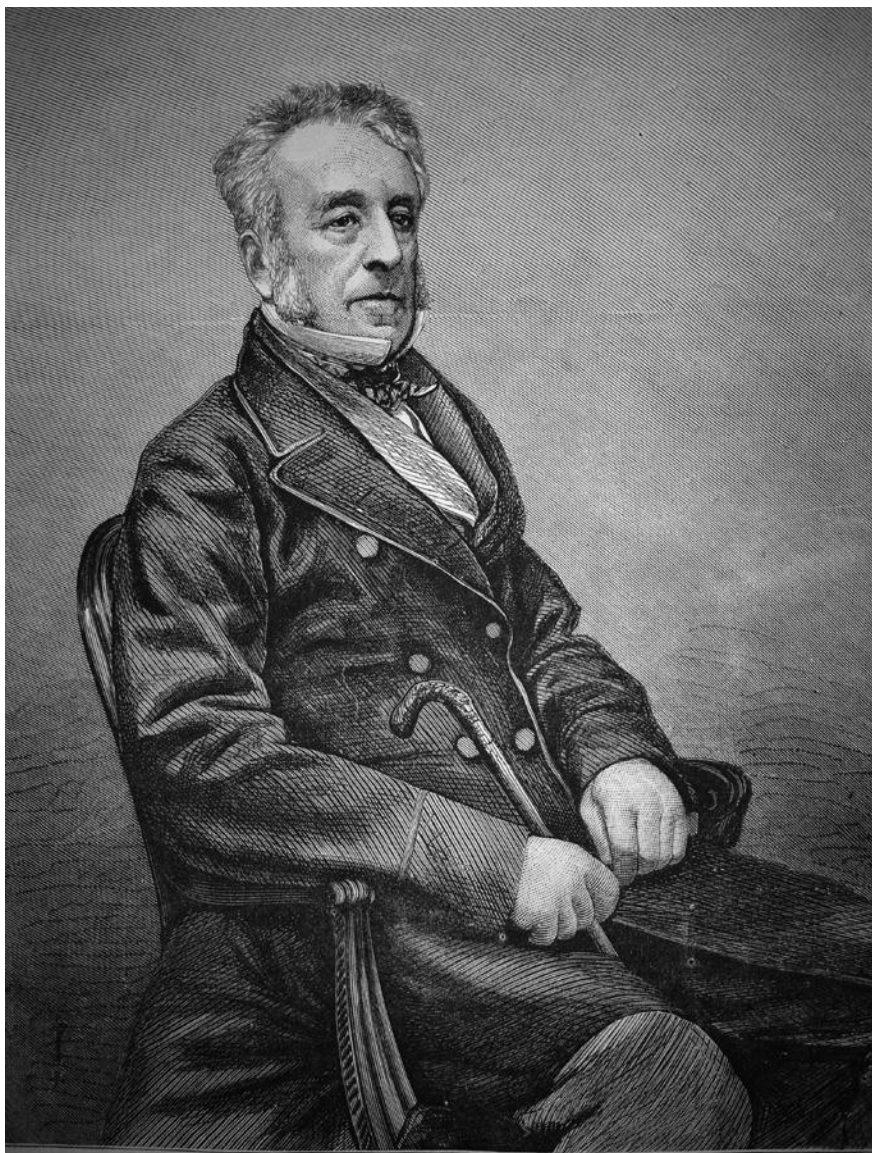
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Kyriakos N. Demetriou

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# Brill's Companion to George Grote and the Classical Tradition

*Edited by*

Kyriakos N. Demetriou



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Currently, he is completing a translation with commentary of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. Aristotle, *Topics* I, VIII, and Selections (Clarendon Aristotle Series), Oxford University Press, 1997. *Aristotle's Prior Analytics* (translation with Introduction, notes, and commentary), Hackett Publishing Company, 1989.

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# Introduction

*Kyriakos N. Demetriou*

George Grote's afterlife in the history of classical studies is marked by a series of profoundly and unequivocally eulogistic accounts. Let me put forward a few by way of a selection.

## The Nineteenth Century

The first quotation must be that of his contemporary historian, Edward Augustus Freeman (1823–92), Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford. Freeman hailed Grote's 12-volume *History of Greece* (1846–56) as

...one of the glories of our age and country. Honourable as it is to the intellectual, it is still more honourable to the moral qualities of its author. His unwearied research, his clearness of vision, his depth and originality of thought, are more easily to be paralleled than his diligent and conscientious striving after truth, and the candor with which he marshals in their due order even the facts which tell most strongly against his conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

The Viennese liberal classicist and philosopher Theodor Gomperz, who died in 1912, espoused Grote's radicalized and progressivist view of ancient democracy and rallied in support of Athens and the hitherto despicable sophists, whom Grote succeeded in discharging from the sweeping denunciations of Plato and the long anti-sophistic tradition. His views on the history of ancient Greece and Platonic philosophy were shaped, on his own testimony, by Grote's sparkling and pervasive historical perspective, diligence and scholarly ingenuity. "Much truth, grandeur, strength, little adornment and no affectation" featured in Grote's portrayal of history, wrote Gomperz, who took pride in acknowledging how much he owed to the radical historian.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E.A. Freeman, "Grote's *History of Greece*," *North British Review* 25 (1856): 172.

<sup>2</sup> T. Gomperz, *Zu Grotes hundertsten Geburtstag* [1894], quoted in Adelaide Weinberg, *Theodor Gomperz and John Stuart Mill* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1963), 35. Gomperz' erudite *Griechische Denker* (Leipzig: Veit, 1896–1909), 3 vols., was written within the philosophical framework sketched earlier by Grote. See W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*

It is worth citing in full Gomperz' vibrant picture of Grote, drawn in a letter to his sister just after his meeting with the historian in London in 1863.

Seriously, I expected a great deal of this distinguished man, but I have found far more than I expected;—above all, a mind completely open and free from all prejudice—“open-minded”... in the highest degree, not a narrow great man, but as far from it as I could have believed possible... With light goes warmth, and I have already today had several refreshing glimpses into the heartfelt, overflowing goodwill, the ungrudging recognition of others, the all embracing patience of this fine spirit. Grote is certainly much more even than his great History shows on the surface, more than he has ever shown even to the most sympathetic reader who, like me, knows how to find and interpret hidden clues. I knew Grote's philosophic point of view very well, as the better in that it is also mine, but I did not know that the philosophic feeling and spirit works in him in so strong and lively a fashion, and that dull learning has seldom hidden and never blocked up this spring of life in him. The mere man of learning, whose idea is a library that has acquired self-consciousness, is completely subordinate, as should be the case, to the thinker, and indeed the universal thinker, a relationship which looks perfectly straightforward, very clear and simple as a prescription, but is one that very few chemists know how to make up.<sup>3</sup>

Gomperz' respect of Grote must have been heightened by the latter's personal circumstances. He was a self-educated Victorian man of letters and a relentless activist, a self-made polymath and polyglot; he took a leading part in the campaign for secular university education, freed from ecclesiastical lineages, and sat as a Radical MP for the City of London. He served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of London for the last nine years of his life, but more importantly he helped introduce Greek history at the old historic universities. At Oxford history formed an important part of the new “Greats” established in 1850, whereas at Cambridge the standard textbook for Greek history was Grote's

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), vol. 3, 12–14, and Arnaldo Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 66.

3 Heinrich Gompertz, *Theodor Gomperz, Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (1936), vol. 1, 338–40, translated by M.L. Clarke, *George Grote: A Biography* (London: Athlone Press, 1962), 90.



work. At around the same period a paper on history was added to the Classical Tripos at Cambridge.<sup>4</sup>

In the “Minutes of Evidence taken before Select Committee” (8 July 1867) there is a remarkable interview conducted between the members of the Committee and the Aristotelian scholar W.L. Newman, Fellow of Balliol College and formerly Reader of History in the University of Oxford. In that interview, Mr. Grant Duff asked Newman:

Have you ever considered why Oxford does so little for classical learning when compared with the universities of Germany?—[Newman] I think the reason is, that there is no considerable class of learned men at Oxford who have thorough leisure for study . . . I think that the absence of that learned class is a great misfortune to the place in this way, that the progress of education in the place depends enormously on the books that are published on the different subjects. I could mention two or three books which have made *quite a revolution* in the education of Oxford, and if a learned class could be constituted at Oxford, such a class as the professoriate would supply, the result might very well be that works of a character which would give an enormous stimulus to Oxford education would appear, and that the University would advance at a tenfold rate, compared with what it does at present. [Mr. Duff] Will you mention some of the works which have caused this revolution?—[Newman] I think that Grote’s History of Greece has done a very great deal; I think that Mr. Mill’s books have done an enormous deal for the studies at Oxford, and I think that Mommsen’s History of Rome has done a great deal. I can trace distinct advantages to the use of those works; but those works come from outsiders, they do not come from those who belong to the University; we have to draw them from the outer world . . .<sup>5</sup>

What a success from an outsider! Grote’s warm reception by the older universities, that were gradually losing their conservative and clerical character with the reforms that followed the Royal Commissions of 1850, signalled, perhaps,

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4 M.L. Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain, 1500–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 121–22.

5 *Special Report from the Select Committee on the Oxford and Cambridge Universities Education Bill; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix* (House of Commons, 31 July 1867), 82.

the epitome of the historian's impetus on revolutionizing classical studies at both the institutional and the academic level.

### The Twentieth Century and Beyond

A hundred years later Arnaldo Momigliano, in his 1952 inaugural lecture at Grote's college, University College London, pledged the encomium of the master historian in remarkably embellished language—yet unsurprisingly an amalgamation of the eulogies and conclusions of Freeman, Gomperz and Newman: Grote was, for Momigliano, essentially the founder of modern historiography of ancient Greece, who combined in his narrative “passionate moral and political interest, vast learning and respect for the evidence.”<sup>6</sup> Writing shortly after the end of World War II, Momigliano's turn to Grote was a congenial and appropriate means not only to re-introduce the Victorian scholar and politician into modern academia, but also to emphasize poignantly the “crisis” that he identified in historical scholarship on ancient Greece—the most prominent being the alienation of the study of political ideas from that of political history. Grote's monumental project, in Momigliano's judgment, embraced a multi-dimensional approach, avoiding the distorting mirror of contemporary one-dimensional interpretations that were based either on partisanship or obsessive focus on specific species of evidentiary or doxographical material.<sup>7</sup>

Gregory Vlastos too, Momigliano's contemporary, hailed Grote as the “prince of Victorian Platonists,” on the basis of the same edifying rationale, I suspect. What is more, mid-twentieth century scholars aspired to define new ideals in moral and political philosophy beyond passive employment: the revival of classical studies was desirable as a means of disengaging from the nightmare of blind adherence to ideologies that led humankind to enormous catastrophes. In the same context, Karl Popper in his fiery *Open Society and its Enemies* (1945) used Grote extensively to attack Plato as a proto-totalitarian thinker and to idealize Athens as a progressive, multicultural, cosmopolitan

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6 Arnaldo Momigliano, *George Grote and the Study of Greek History: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University College*, 19 February 1952 (London: H. K. Lewis and Co., Ltd., 1952), 11.

7 As Henry Sidgwick, one of Grote's disciples succinctly put it: “Mr. Grote was a historian, and a philosopher, and a philosophical historian.” Quoted in Bart Schultz, *Henry Sidgwick—Eye of the Universe: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 57, a book that reveals several interesting aspects of Grote's philosophical outlook as it does for the Victorian moralist.

and above all individualist-liberal democracy.<sup>8</sup> Popper's cosmopolitan progressivism and liberal vision of Athens was essentially an attack upon the perceived ideological roots of fascism and National Socialism, such as Hegelian idealism, emotionalism, romanticism and pessimism. Popper's more blatant error, however, is that he identified Grote's Plato with the various Nazi misreadings of Plato, some of which culminated in such grisly publications like Joachim Bannes' *Hitlers Kampf und Platos Staat* and Hildelbrandt's *Platon: Der Kampf des Geistes um die Macht* (both published in 1933).<sup>9</sup> Along the same lines, Eric Havelock, in his 1957 *Liberal Temper in Greek Politics*, sought Grote's aid to reenact the rhetors and the sophists as proto-liberals while Popper's anti-Platonism was rapidly disseminating within the circles of classical political theorists.

Martin L. Clarke's 1962 *Biography of George Grote* interestingly coincided with the Cuban Missile Crisis and the culmination of the Cold War in ideological, strategic and political terms. Grote was thus firmly introduced into the troubled 1960s. Clarke brought to light a considerable amount of new material, drew upon journal articles, pamphlets, manuscripts and unpublished correspondence, to render a most lively portrait of the liberal banker and radical philosopher. In the *Biography* Clarke laid emphasis on Grote's political radicalism, his intrepid republicanism and beliefs in the extension of the franchise (including votes for women), liberty of thought and expression, education for all, and on his confidence in the human intellect's ability to achieve rationality and autonomy, thus dispelling self-deception and deep-seated prejudices. Clarke's was clearly not an idealized picture of Grote himself, the historian and politician; it was rather an idealized picture of a *character*—the type of man humankind needed at the time to restore its proper cultural, political and ideological balance. It is not accidental that Clarke published the biography of Grote only ten years following Momigliano's Inaugural Lecture at UCL: as literary works, both bear conspicuous similarities in their call for liberty of thought, political radicalism, and the revival of classical learning. The invocation of the

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8 Malachi Hacothen, "The limits of the national paradigm in the study of political thought: the case of Karl Popper and Central European Cosmopolitanism," in Dario Castiglione, Iain Hampsher-Monk, ed., *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 254–62.

9 See Melissa S. Lane, "The Platonic Politics of the George Circle: A Reconsideration," in M.S. Lane and Martin Ruehl, ed. *A Poet's Reich: Politics and Culture in the George Circle* (London: Camden House, 2011), 133–64. Further, see Tereza Orozco, "Die Platon-Rezeption in Deutschland um 1933," in *"Die besten Geister die Nation": Philosophie und Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Ilse Korotin (Vienna: Picus, 1994), 141–85.

radical liberal and philosopher was a most suitable strategy for such a call. Yet, intense debates over the historiography of philosophy, contexts, and textual intentionality were soon to dispel such personifying character-simulations.

Then, in 1996, William M. Calder III edited a slim volume to celebrate Grote's 200th birthday in the hope that it "will convince a younger generation than ours that a predecessor, although born two hundred years ago, still has much to teach them." In the same volume Charles Kahn pointed out that a

contemporary scholar can only approach with awe Grote's study of Plato. . . . It is a measure not only of Grote's immense scholarship and broad intelligence but also of his heroic conception of history that he could assume as part of his task to describe and comment so fully on the thought of the two great 4th-century philosophers [the second is Aristotle], in addition to Socrates and the sophists.<sup>10</sup>

Paul Cartledge's "Preface" to the 1999 re-edition of the condensed edition of Grote's *History* in 1907, done by J.M. Mitchell and M.O.B. Caspari, is an informative and enlightening study on the reception of Grote (or Grote's legacy) up to the end of the twentieth century; it encompasses an instructive number of laudatory statements, panegyrics, tributes and complimentary evaluations of Grote's work. Jennifer T. Roberts, in her *Athens on Trial*, reaffirmed that Grote's "is the earliest history of Greece still consulted by scholars"; Cartledge reminds us that his work has remained popular and influential over most important twentieth-century historians of ancient Greece, including de Ste Croix, Momigliano, Finley and Hansen.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, in 1968 Moses I. Finley could still maintain with confidence that the *History of Greece*, as written by the "liberal and banker George Grote . . . was the first major modern work on the subject (and one of the greatest ever written)."<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Mortimer Chambers diagnosed that "in English this 12-volume work has for rivals only four one-volume histories, one of them dating essentially from 1900; and the time when

10 Charles H. Kahn, "George Grote's *Plato and the Companions of Sokrates*," in W.M. Calder III, *George Grote Reconsidered: A 200th Birthday Celebration with a First Edition of his Essay "Of the Athenian Government"* (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1996), 43.

11 Jennifer T. Roberts, *Athens on Trial: The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 239 and Cartledge, ed. *A History of Greece. From the Time of Solon to 403 BC* (London: Routledge), xvi–xvii.

12 M.I. Finley, *Aspects of Antiquity* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), 29.

anyone will challenge it with a treatment even remotely comparable is surely far away.”<sup>13</sup> On the philosophical-historical side, Terence Irwin pointed out that

Grote's work constitutes a contribution of the first rank both to the study of Greek history and to the study of Greek philosophy. None of his English contemporaries equalled his contribution to either area of study; and no one at all has equalled his contribution to both areas.<sup>14</sup>

The merits of Grote's classical scholarship have procured for it, ever since the publication of his *History of Greece* (1846–56), *Plato and the other Companions of Sokrates* (1865), and the regrettably unfinished *Aristotle* (1872, published posthumously, ed. by Alexander Bain), widespread applause and popularity. As Momigliano succinctly observed, “[u]nder Grote's archonship a new era started.” Today, we are very much aware that the Victorian study of the Greek heritage was an ideological arena of thoroughly engaged scholarship and writing. Victorian scholars, as well as nineteenth-century freethinkers and politicians, all alike invoked classical heritage as common property for the purpose of expounding a variety of ideas that fitted their mindset and ideological agendas. Yet we can safely maintain that, to a certain degree, we are the heirs of Grote's achievement. Unquestionably, we may challenge his interpretations as outdated and wanting in evidentiary material (even though it is proper to emphasize his painstaking attention to scholarship in literature, his command of German publications and his wide and deep reading of all available ancient Greek and Latin texts), or even object to his philosophical and ideological vision that shaped his historical narrative, yet our intellectual indebtedness is founded on more enduringly solid ground. First, that is because Grote projected his radical and unorthodox approach at Plato's bio-bibliographical and exegetical tradition (thus overturning centuries of commonplace arguments as well as contesting much of the excited hyperbolism of German *Altertumswissenschaft* that involved Plato); and second, because we are ready to accept a great deal of his arguments as *assumptions* for our own work. Indeed, Grote's sound scholarship spurred a new appreciation for classical republicanism that transformed

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13 M. Chambers, in W.M. Calder III, *Grote Reconsidered*, 1. In the same volume, George Huxley (“George Grote on Early Greece”) maintains that Grote's *History* was “a sustained exercised in the critical study of historical testimonies,” 24.

14 T.H. Irwin, “Mill and the Classical World,” in J. Skorupski, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Stuart Mill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 424.

the field of ancient Greek historiography from its roots, just as it marked the beginning of a new era of Platonic criticism.<sup>15</sup>



My own study of Grote started twenty-five years ago at University College London. On an exceptionally misty and warm day in July 1989 I travelled from York to London to meet Fred Rosen, a scholar of utilitarianism and director of the thriving Bentham Project, in a small park opposite the History Department. We sat down and talked for a couple of hours about Grote, under the soft whisper of gently rustling leaves on the trees. Grote was intensely associated with the foundation of the University of London in 1826 (renamed University College in 1836), together with Bentham, James Mill and other notable utilitarian thinkers and Philosophic Radicals. On that occasion, it was just as if Grote were there with us, both an inspirer and co-discussant. Predictably, Fred embraced with enthusiasm and zest my idea of investigating Grote's intellectual life at length; he so much appreciated Grote and thought he had been, disappointingly, ignored to be eventually left to oblivion.

It may be useful to consider that at the time, i.e. in the late 1980s, apart from Harriet Grote's 1873 *Personal Life of George Grote* and Clarke's knowledgeable 1962 *Biography of George Grote* there was no monograph dedicated to analyzing, exploring or evaluating Grote's works and legacy. Frank Turner's chapters were integrally linked to Grote's classical scholarship in his pioneering study *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*; Richard Jenkyns' wide-ranging exploration of ancient Greece on British society in his *The Victorians and Ancient*

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15 Grote's *History of Greece* enjoyed an unrivalled success both in Europe and in America. Translated into several languages, it was the first Greek history ever produced in Britain to enjoy such an international reputation. Characteristically, there appeared French, German and Italian translation as well as many American editions. In France the *History* was translated by Alfred L. de Sadous, *Histoire de la Grèce*, 19 vols (Paris: Lacroix, 1864–67); in Germany by N.N. W. Meissner and E. Höpfner, *Geschichte Griechenlands*, 6 vols. (Leipzig: Verlag von Theodor Hofmann, 1850–55); in Italy by Olimpia Colonna, *Storia della Grecia antica*, incomplete, 4 vols (Napoli, 1855–58); in the US it was published initially in 12 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1848–58) while several reprints and new editions followed. Lengthy selected extracts appeared in T. Fischer, *Griechische Mythologie und Antiquitäten*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1856–60); T. Fischer, *Lebens-und Charakter-Bilder griechischer Staatmänner und Philosophen aus G. Grotes Griechischer Geschichte*, 2 vols. (Königsberg: Bornträger, 1859).

*Greece*<sup>16</sup> went somehow deep by the standards of the 1980s, but they nonetheless formed a microcosm of an amazingly wider intellectual picture. (One may also note that the field of “Reception Studies” was then in its infancy, if existing at all.)<sup>17</sup> For a keen pragmatic scholar of Fred Rosen’s calibre, there was one additional—extremely important and neglected—dimension to explore: the Utilitarians’ contribution to the development of classical studies in Britain, the Continent, and beyond. For Bentham’s cynical, damning and nihilistic verdict on Plato was not to be taken as representative or in any way illustrative of the Utilitarians’ indebtedness to the classics. “While Xenophon was writing his *History* and Euclid teaching *Geometry*,” Bentham wrote mockingly, “Socrates and *Plato* were talking *nonsense*, on pretence of teaching morality.”<sup>18</sup> That was a crudely generalizing and contextually embedded statement that should not have been taken seriously. James and John Stuart Mill, for instance, took pride in being called “Platonists,” in fact they were self-declared Platonists—as the younger Mill wrote, who “endeavoured to practice Plato’s mode of investigation.”<sup>19</sup> If the Mills were Platonists, in the sense Radical Philosophers understood the elusive meaning of that concept, then Grote was, by far, the arch-Platonist.

Thus started my, as it has proven to be, lifelong engagement with Grote—the great humanist philosophic radical, an exponent of critical epistemology and an authentic follower of the basic premises of Socratism which he helped to revive. During all those years, I have seen Grote’s “popularity” being increased substantially. Cartledge’s re-edition of the condensed *History*, Oswyn Murray’s publication of the third volume of Edward Bulwer Lytton’s *Athens: its Rise and Fall* (2004), Peter Liddel’s selection of parts from Bishop Connop Thirlwall’s *History of Greece* (2007), have been, *inter alia*, fully-fledged occasions for turning our attention to the importance of Grote as the modern historiographer of ancient Greece within the wider conceptual and intellectual framework of modernity. Other works, which sprung out of the now flourishing genre of reception studies or simply evolved within the range of a more engrossed

16 F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

17 On the enormous scale of the discipline, its dissemination in academia and broadly methodological approaches, see Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

18 See Fred Rosen, *Classical Utilitarianism from Hume to Mill* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 201. The quote is from Bentham’s *Deontology* [1834], 39–40.

19 John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* [1873] in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J.M. Robson, 33 vols. (Toronto: Toronto University Press and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961–91), vol. 1, 25.



intellectual historiography, analyse Grote's works in various ways and from multiple perspectives by re-contextualizing them, decoding them by means of utilizing new tools and methodologies, and tracing either the genealogy of his ideological and intellectual apparatus or the impact they have had on succeeding thinkers or schools of thought. A most recent work, within that trend, is Antis Loizides' *John Stuart Mill's Platonic Heritage*, which demonstrates the extent to which John Stuart Mill's and Grote's interpretations are inextricably intertwined, and effectively how much Mill owed to Grote in his platonizing mission and twist of mind.<sup>20</sup> Other scholars, like Giovanni Giorgini, Federico Santangelo, Christopher Stray, Nadia Urbinati, Karen Whedbee, Myles F. Burnyeat, Duncan Bell, E.J. Potter, Arlene Saxonhouse, Melissa Lane and many others, found in Grote either a source for basic research in the history of classical reception and political theory, or a useful source for elucidating aspects of intellectual and cultural history that are still with us today.<sup>21</sup>

Time and experience proved that Grote was not only saved from oblivion, but there is scarcely a classical scholar from Victorian times who is still so "modern" in terms of being referred to, either for the purpose of refuting him or endorsing him, in recent and contemporary bibliography. Very few would recall today the names of his spirited opponents and, not rarely, vitriolic critics. Let me remind you the Cambridge scholar Richard Shilleto who was

20 A. Loizides, *John Stuart Mill's Platonic Heritage: Happiness Through Character* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2013).

21 G. Giorgini, "Radical Plato: John Stuart Mill, George Grote and the Revival of Plato in Nineteenth-Century England," *History of Political Thought* 30 (2009): 617–46. Melissa Lane, *Plato's Progeny: How Socrates and Plato Still Captivate the Modern Mind* (London: Duckworth, 2001). E.J. Potter, *Confronting Modernity: Ancient Athens and Modern British Political Thought, c.1780's–1880's*, PhD Thesis (London: University of London, 2005). A.W. Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). K.E. Whedbee, "Reclaiming Rhetorical Democracy: George Grote's Defense of Cleon and the Athenian Demagogues," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34 no. 4 (2004): 71–95 and "Making the Worse Case Appear the Better: British Reception of the Greek Sophists prior to 1850," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11 no. 4 (2008): 603–30. M.F. Burnyeat, "The Past in the Present: Plato as Educator of Nineteenth-Century Britain," in A.O. Rorty, ed., *Philosophers on Education: New Historical Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 353–73. D. Bell, "From Ancient to Modern in Victorian Imperial Thought," *The Historical Journal* 49 (2006): 735–59. F. Santangelo, "George Grote's Early Papers on Roman Culture," *Quaderni di Storia* 63 (2006): 57–109. C. Stray, "Thucydides or Grote? Classical Disputes and Disputed Classics in Nineteenth-Century Cambridge," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 127 (1997): 363–71. N. Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).



enraged by Grote's unconventional defence of Cleon against Thucydides, in effect to such an extent that he published in 1851 a furious pamphlet entitled, "Thucydides or Grote?" Even a great scholar such as Benjamin Jowett, who highly respected Grote, calling him "his father Parmenides," and then rushed to refute his Platonic exegetical model is, I dare say, no longer a lively figure in Platonic studies, except, perhaps, as a translator of the *corpus*.<sup>22</sup> Even if one of his fierce opponents on the grounds of philosophical divergence, John Stuart Blackie, could merit such a high place in Victorian intellectual history,<sup>23</sup> his immensely idealized Plato (much alike Jowett's) as the "great apostle of Idealism," asceticism and moral truth, the champion and constructive genius against secularism and natural experimentation, surely stands too far distanced from twenty-first century trends and conceptualizations in Platonic analysis. Similarly Thomas Maguire (1831–89), Professor of Moral Philosophy at Trinity College, Dublin, who wrote his *Essays on the Platonic Ethics* for the sole task of refuting Grote's Platonism, himself vigorously inspired by idealism and transcendentalism, is now totally and irreversibly passed into total oblivion.<sup>24</sup> I could count several classical scholars, amongst Grote's opponents, who share the same fate, but it suffices to say that much that was written about the classics in Victorian Britain speaks more to the Victorianist than to the modern classical scholar.



This volume aims to unravel and elucidate both known and unknown aspects of Grote's intellectual life, classical scholarship, ideology and biography. It gathers together a brilliant group of distinguished experts who offer fresh analysis and appraisal of Grote's position in classical scholarship and intellectual history. Above all, I would like to draw attention to the chapter on Grote's *Aristotle* (the second written ever, the first being John Stuart Mill's review of the book in *Fortnightly Review* in January 1873) by Robin Smith.<sup>25</sup> I am indebted to Pierre Briant, Paul Cartledge, Peter Liddel, Antis Loizides, John Gibbins, Giovanni Giorgini, James Kierstead, Bruce Kinzer, Sarah Richardson, J.B. Schneewind and Catherine Zuckert for their insightful chapters and the enthusiasm with

22 See Jowett's lengthy reference to Grote in the Preface to the first edition of his translation of Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1871).

23 Stuart Wallace, *John Stuart Blackie: Scottish Scholar and Patriot* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

24 T. Maguire, *Essays on the Platonic Ethics* (London: Rivingtons, 1870).

25 Mill's "Grote's *Aristotle*" is reprinted in *Collected Works*, vol. 11, 473–510.

which they have embraced this splendid project. My gratitude goes posthumously to Catherine Fuller, whose untimely loss I learnt while I was putting together my thoughts on the structure of the volume.

As things turned out, this is the first installment of the new series *Brill's Companions to Classical Reception*—a most fitting début. More than twenty Companions in various areas of classical reception studies are now being prepared for publication and are due by the end of 2017.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude first and foremost to all contributors, and particularly to Paul Cartledge whose gracious willingness to be involved in the project at its very onset has encouraged me to realize its significance. I owe special thanks to Philip Schofield, director of the Bentham Project, for his generous assistance in getting permission from the family of the late Catherine Fuller in order to publish her essay on Bentham's (and Grote's) *Natural Religion*; Antis Loizides for his constant support, insights, and help to improve parts of the volume; Irene van Rossum, who had wholeheartedly embraced the project while serving as Classics Acquisitions Editor at Brill and the present Editor Jennifer Pavelko. I am also much indebted to Tessel Jonquière for her patience, advice and assistance in dealing with practical issues; Judy Pereira for overseeing the production of the volume.

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# George Grote, The Philosophic Radical and Politician

*Bruce Kinzer*

Just as George Grote sought to give his age, and posterity, a new history of Greece, so too did Philosophic Radicalism, the school of politics to which he belonged in the 1830s, seek to give a new political order to nineteenth-century England.<sup>1</sup> How did Grote become a member of this school? What led him to set aside his work on the history of Greece in order to take up a political career? What were his political hopes and aspirations? Why, in the end, did these prove unrealizable? Such questions must be at the heart of any study of Grote, Philosophic Radical and Politician.

The story must begin with Grote's introduction to James Mill, most probably in 1819, an introduction brought about by David Ricardo.<sup>2</sup> By this time Mill's association with Jeremy Bentham went back a decade, the former having

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1 There are two standard treatments of the politics of the Philosophic Radicals, each excellent in its way: Joseph Hamburger, *Intellectuals in Politics: John Stuart Mill and the Philosophic Radicals* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), and William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice, 1817–1841* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Hamburger, a 'lumper,' provides a penetrating analysis of the doctrine, goals, and actions that made the Philosophic Radicals a distinct and coherent political group in the decade after the passage of the Reform Act of 1832. As the book's subtitle indicates, he gives more attention to J.S. Mill than to any other single Philosophic Radical. At no point does Hamburger offer an extended commentary on Grote's thoughts respecting strategy or tactics. Thomas, a 'splitter,' trains his practiced eye on "personalities and episodes in the history of the group which came to be called the Philosophic Radicals" (1). Differences within the group matter more to Thomas than what its members had in common. He gives thirty-three pages to a chapter titled "George Grote and the Ballot." The broad scope of two older works of significance, Élie Halévy, *La Formation du Radicalisme Philosophique*, 3 vols. (Paris: Alcan, 1901–04), translated into English by Mary Morris under the title *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1928), and Leslie Stephen's *The English Utilitarians*, 3 vols. (London: Duckworth, 1900) precluded their giving detailed and systematic treatment to the political activity of the Philosophic Radicals in the 1830s. M.L. Clarke's valuable *George Grote: A Biography* (London: The Athlone Press, 1962) includes a chapter on Grote's parliamentary career (chapter 3, 49–74) that provides an illuminating summary of his political activity during the 1830s, without, however, attempting a full-scale evaluation of the broader significance of Grote's political conduct in that decade.

2 For the dating of this introduction, see Clarke, *George Grote*, 20n.

acquired a reputation as a formidable exponent of Benthamite doctrine. He had also recently published his multi-volume *History of British India*, the writing of which had taken ten years to complete. The force of Mill's intellect, personality, and argumentation often had a remarkable impact on those who found themselves in his presence, including men whose own power of thought greatly impressed their contemporaries. Thirty years after Mill's death Grote sought to convey the qualities of mind, character, and speech that had made him such an authoritative figure. "His unpremeditated oral exposition was hardly less effective than his prepared work with his pen; his colloquial fertility on philosophical subjects, his power of discussing himself, and of stimulating others to discuss, his ready responsive inspirations through all the shifts and windings of a sort of Platonic dialogue,—all these accomplishments were, to those who knew him, even more impressive than what he composed for the press." Grote went on to note Mill's "strenuous character, earnest convictions, and single-minded devotion to truth." The combined force of such attributes gave Mill "a powerful intellectual ascendancy over younger minds."<sup>3</sup> Grote himself, twenty-one years Mill's junior, proved highly susceptible to the latter's influence. According to Harriet Grote, before long "there existed but little difference, in point of opinion, between master and pupil."<sup>4</sup>

In temperament, if not in opinion, Grote and Mill differed markedly. A letter Grote wrote to his close friend George Warde Norman in May 1819 attests to this difference.

I have breakfasted and dined several times with Ricardo, who has been uncommonly civil and kind to me. I have met Mill often at his house, and hope to derive great pleasure and instruction from his acquaintance, as he is a very profound thinking man, and seems well disposed to communicate, as well as clear and intelligible in his manner. His mind has, indeed, all that cynicism and asperity which belong to the Benthamian school, and what I chiefly dislike in him is, the readiness and seeming preference with which he dwells on the *faults and defects* of others—even of the greatest men! But it is so very rarely that a man of any depth comes across my path, that I shall most assuredly cultivate his acquaintance a good deal farther.<sup>5</sup>

3 "Review of John Stuart Mill on the Philosophy of Sir Wm. Hamilton," in *The Minor Works of George Grote*, ed. Alexander Bain (London: John Murray, 1873), 284.

4 Harriet Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote* (London: John Murray, 1873), 22.

5 Quoted in Alexander Bain, *James Mill: A Biography* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1882), 180–1.

Mill needed nothing more than this growing acquaintance to acquire a decisive influence over the content of Grote's politics. The latter acquired from Mill a coherent and cogent political logic. In 1820 Mill's *Essay on Government* appeared in the *Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica*. Its chief aim was to identify what should be done to constitute a legislature that would enact measures promoting the greatest aggregate quantity of happiness. The essential function of government was to protect life and property; only government had the capacity to provide the security individuals needed to advance their self-interest without fear of violence or arbitrary expropriation. Presupposing that the pursuit of individual self-interest was a universal attribute of human nature, James Mill argued that a political system dominated by a minority would inevitably be injurious to the interests of the majority. How could this not be so in a world where "every man, who has not all the objects of his desire, has inducement to take them from any man who is weaker than himself"?<sup>6</sup> The only effectual means of guarding against such predatory conduct was to devise a system of representation that would give decisive voice to the aggregate of individual interests constituting the community. This could be accomplished through a wide suffrage and frequent elections. Those responsible for the making of public policy would thereby be made answerable to the community at large, and would be disposed to act with a view to serving the general interest.

James Mill considered his *Essay* educative rather than polemical in purpose. He set forth premises and deductions whose reasonableness he trusted his readers to acknowledge. Apart from recommending frequent elections and a franchise sufficiently broad to ensure an adequate expression of the general interest, the *Essay* had little to say about the specifics of parliamentary reform. An article on government for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was not the place for proposing radical constitutional reform.<sup>7</sup>

In 1817 Bentham had brought forward an undeniably radical scheme in his *Plan of Parliamentary Reform*, which advocated universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and the secret ballot. This plan had been criticized by Sir James Mackintosh in an article that appeared in the December 1818 issue of the *Edinburgh Review*.<sup>8</sup> As Macintosh put it, "the question between us and

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6 "Essay on Government," in *Utilitarian Logic and Politics: James Mill's "Essay on Government," Macaulay's Critique and the Ensuing Debate*, ed. Jack Lively and John Rees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 57.

7 Mill's articles for the *Encyclopædia* were commissioned by Macvey Napier, who would succeed Francis Jeffrey as the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, the quarterly periodical that served the Whig cause.

8 "Universal Suffrage," *Edinburgh Review* 31 (Dec. 1818): 165–203.



Mr. Bentham is, whether all interests will be best protected, where the representatives are chosen by all men,—or where they are elected by considerable portions only, of all classes of men.”<sup>9</sup> In characteristic Whig fashion, Macintosh held that good government could be secured by giving each major interest in society an appropriate measure of representation in the legislature. In 1821 Grote published *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform*, a lengthy pamphlet that rejected Macintosh’s arguments and called for the enactment of the Benthamite program (an extensive suffrage, frequent elections, and the secret ballot).<sup>10</sup> Sectional or class interests were invariably partial interests that would seek to benefit themselves at the expense of all other interests. Grote estimated that fewer than two hundred families controlled a majority of seats in the House of Commons. This oligarchy used its political dominance to please itself irrespective of the public good. Only through making the electorate virtually co-extensive with the community could the universal interest be fittingly expressed and the pernicious political influence of ‘sinister’ interests extinguished. The theoretical underpinning of Grote’s pamphlet, his first publication, carries the imprint of James Mill’s *Essay on Government and History of British India*. Mill had a keen appreciation of Grote’s character and mind. In a letter written to Macvey Napier in early 1821, Mill spoke of Grote as “a young City banker . . . and . . . a very extraordinary person, in his circumstances, both for knowledge and clear vigorous thinking.”<sup>11</sup> Grote’s mentor spurred him to write *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform*.

In the years between the publication of Bentham’s *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* and the appearance of Grote’s pamphlet the extra-parliamentary political climate had changed. Bentham’s pamphlet of 1817 was sent forth in the midst of an acute social, economic, and political crisis. The years directly following the close of the Napoleonic Wars saw major cuts in government expenditure, a rapid demobilization of the armed forces, a series of bad harvests that dramatically increased bread prices, falling wage rates, rising levels of unemployment and underemployment, and unrelenting population growth, the result being deep and widespread distress. Severe economic contraction and profound hardship gave rise to powerful currents of social discontent and unrest, which found expression in food riots, industrial disputes, and episodes of machine-breaking. Such conditions furnished fertile ground for radical political agitation. An underground radical press and sundry radical

9 “Universal Suffrage,” 184.

10 George Grote, *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform; with a Reply to the Objections of the Edinburgh Review*, No. LXI (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1821).

11 Bain, *James Mill*, 193.

political leaders blamed a corrupt political order and the government of the day—Lord Liverpool's ministry—for the suffering of the people and the disturbed state of the country. In their minds the only remedy was implementation of the radical platform of manhood suffrage and frequent elections. The nation's dire circumstances meant that their message reached an ever-wider audience. Bentham's *Plan of Parliamentary Reform*, although far more cerebral and abstract than the typical productions of popular Radicalism—and shorn of any appeal to natural rights or the 'ancient constitution'<sup>12</sup>—addressed issues whose contemporary relevance seemed unmistakable. By 1821, however, extra-parliamentary pressure for a fundamental overhaul of the political system had subsided.

This change could in no way be attributed to a rise in the government's popularity. Liverpool's administration, buttressed between 1812 and 1815 by patriotic fervor and the military successes of the last years of the Napoleonic Wars, was ill-equipped to deal with the problems the nation faced after the restoration of peace. Indeed, no administration could have found effective answers to those problems. The diagnosis and prescription of the Radicals had an appealing simplicity, one that belied the complexity of the forces at work in English society during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Radicals of all stripes argued that economic distress was the product of high taxation, and that high taxation emanated from the aristocratic monopoly of political power and the self-serving use to which that power was put. Taxes extracted from the people paid for the jobs, sinecures, and pensions given to those patronized by the governing classes. The baneful dominance of the aristocracy could only be broken by giving electoral power to the people. Once the legislature encompassed the interests of the people, all would be set right. Neither Liverpool's government nor the majority of the House of Commons sustaining it (often grudgingly) would sanction parliamentary reform. Still fresh were the memories of the French Revolution, and Tories were not in the habit of drawing a distinction between constitutional reform and revolution. Unrest that wore a political face met with repression. Statutes passed in 1817 suspended habeas corpus and imposed tight restrictions on the holding of public meetings. In the aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre of August 1819, in which local magistrates ordered the use of military force to break up a mass reform meeting outside Manchester, Liverpool's government introduced legislation that prohibited unauthorized military exercises (reports of marching and drilling by

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12 Many Radicals argued that the English Constitution had ancient democratic roots in the freedom-loving society of the Teutonic forests. Bentham's way of thinking ruled out the invoking of such a notion.

disaffected civilians had reached the government), empowered magistrates to enter homes in search of arms, and placed further restrictions on public meetings and the freedom of the press. No government enjoying the confidence and loyalty of its people would think it necessary to resort to such measures.

This legislation probably had little to do with the weakening of the movement for parliamentary reform evident in the early 1820s, when Grote brought out his pamphlet. The chief cause of this weakening was a much improved economic climate, which rendered the existing political order less obnoxious to many of those who had taken part in the protests and agitations of the post-Waterloo years. A run of excellent harvests sharply reduced food prices and increased mass purchasing power, thereby stimulating heightened activity in the commercial and industrial sectors. Liverpool's ministry, in a wretched state in 1820 owing to the public hostility aroused by the Queen Caroline Affair,<sup>13</sup> was subsequently able to profit from the cheering economic developments. Buoyed by rising economic prosperity and strengthened by a cabinet reorganization in 1822, Liverpool's administration had no cause to worry about a rising demand for parliamentary reform, no sign of which surfaced again until the end of the 1820s.<sup>14</sup> Soon after the publication of Grote's pamphlet, the Benthamite attack on the established order would shift to a different field of battle.

In 1822 a work entitled *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* appeared in print. The name of the author given on the title page was "Philip Beauchamp"; the publisher was Richard Carlile, a free-thinking Radical who at the time was serving a six-year sentence in Dorchester Jail for blasphemy.<sup>15</sup> The pseudonymous "Philip Beauchamp" stood in for Bentham and Grote. The latter's connection with James Mill had brought him into close contact with Bentham, whose writings Grote studied when visiting the great man at Bentham's house in Queen's Square Place, Westminster. Grote drew upon Bentham's extensive notes on religion to craft a systematic analysis of the malignant effects of religious belief on human

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13 When the Prince Regent finally ascended to the throne as George IV early in 1820, he resolved to prevent his estranged wife Caroline from securing the rights and privileges of Queenship. He bullied his ministers into introducing a Bill of Pains and Penalties against Caroline, which led to a sordid trial in the House of Lords. The public rallied in support of Caroline, and the government ultimately withdrew the Bill.

14 No petitions for parliamentary reform were presented to the House of Commons between 1824 and 1829.

15 Carlile's wife, assisted by experienced printers, kept the presses running during Carlile's incarceration.

happiness. The term “natural religion” commonly referred to a faith grounded in evidence distinct from “revelation”; its presence in the title was designed to provide protective cover for a position that implicitly denied the truth of Christianity no less than its utility (explicit denial of such truth would have invited prosecution). Religious belief, argued Bentham and Grote, diminished human happiness because it yielded more harm than good, more misery than comfort. The self-abnegation urged by religion in the form of fasting, celibacy, and the repudiation of social amusements; the guilt arising from the misplaced scruples inculcated by religion; the suffering caused by the fear of damnation experienced by those facing imminent death; the antipathies and rancor emanating from religious sectarianism; the cast of mind that refused to acknowledge the authority of empirical evidence when such evidence contradicted religious tenets—all this, and more, lessened the “temporal happiness of mankind.” The notion that systems of religious belief offered essential sanctions for right conduct was spurious, the true source of such sanctions being the force of public opinion—the wish to earn the praise of one’s fellows and to be treated well by others. Virtuous conduct did not depend on religious faith.

I suspect James Mill, rather than Bentham or Grote, came up with the idea that Grote should convert Bentham’s notes into a finished composition on religion’s noxious tendencies. Grote’s religious views prior to his association with James Mill evidently were conventional enough. Harriet Grote told Kate Amberley in December 1865 that “James Mill destroyed Mr. Grote’s faith after he was grown up,” adding that Grote “suffered much in giving up the old beliefs.”<sup>16</sup> John Stuart Mill, in his *Autobiography*, tells us that his father had in his possession the manuscript copy of *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, which he passed on to his son. John Mill “made a marginal analysis” of the work, whose “searching analysis produced the greatest effect upon me.”<sup>17</sup> James Mill made no effort to conceal his skepticism from his eldest son, who was brought up without religious belief. The voice of “Philip Beauchamp” was also the voice of James Mill. J.S. Mill notes that his father, in “giving me an opinion contrary to that of the world . . . thought it necessary to give it as one which could not prudently be avowed to the world.”<sup>18</sup> Unlike Bentham, James Mill,

16 *The Amberley Papers: Bertrand Russell’s Family Background*, ed. Bertrand Russell and Patricia Russell, 2 vols. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1937), vol. 1, 421.

17 *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 1, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 73.

18 *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 1, 45.

and Grote, "Philip Beauchamp" was not prosecutable. The avowing was done; the identity of the avowers was protected.<sup>19</sup>

Although the society these non-believers sought to influence considered itself "Christian," cleavages within English Christendom gave rise to contention in the civil and political sphere. The most fundamental divide was between Churchmen (adherents of the Established Church) and Protestant Dissenters (Methodists, Congregationalists, Scottish Presbyterians, Baptists, Unitarians, Quakers). The latter were subject to various civil disabilities, the most important of which stemmed from legislation enacted by the Cavalier Parliament of Charles II. The Corporation Act of 1661 stipulated that only those who took Holy Communion in an Anglican church could hold municipal office. The Test Act of 1673 required the same of all holders of military and civil office under the Crown. The reaction of the governing classes to the French Revolution and English Jacobinism embraced a stern refusal to modify the Constitution in Church and State. The late 1820s, however, would see the emergence of a crisis of the old order, a crisis whose character impelled Grote to embark on a political path that led to his election to the House of Commons.

In the years before the late 1820s the issue of Catholic emancipation garnered more attention than did the disabilities of Protestant Nonconformists. Although the numbers, wealth, and respectability of Protestant Dissenters climbed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, they remained a minority in England. In Ireland Catholics made up the great bulk of the population. The Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland, which went into effect in 1801, abolished the Irish Parliament and gave Ireland a hundred seats in the Parliament of what now became the United Kingdom. No conscientious Catholic could take the oath required of members of the House of Commons. During the 1820s Daniel O'Connell, a brilliant Irish barrister and gifted political leader, mounted a formidable agitation in Ireland aimed at removing the barrier to Catholic membership of the House of Commons (i.e. "Catholic emancipation"). The Whigs supported Catholic emancipation; Tories were divided on the issue. No Tory administration could function without the participation of individuals ready to support the admission of Catholics to the House

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19 It should be pointed out that the authorities seldom went after writers of property and standing (by the early 1820s even James Mill, the son of a shoemaker, had attained such a standing). Richard Carlile did not fall into this category, and the form of popular radicalism and infidelity he espoused was intended to reach a plebeian audience whose disaffection from the established order caused the authorities real concern. The readership of a Bentham, a James Mill, or a George Grote—small in size and respectable in character—caused much less alarm.

of Commons. The great majority of rank-and-file Tories adamantly opposed Catholic emancipation; most front-bench government ministers in the House of Commons favored it. The issue was an 'open question,' meaning that members of the government were at liberty to align their vote with their conscience. Lord Liverpool, himself strongly opposed to Catholic emancipation, could rely upon a majority in the House of Lords to quash any pro-Catholic measure that might win a majority in the House of Commons. The Whigs regarded Catholic emancipation as more pressing than relief of Protestant Dissenters. Many of the latter hesitated to make an issue of their disabilities because they worried that repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts might well lead to Catholic emancipation, an outcome anathema to many Nonconformists, Methodists especially.

Tensions within Liverpool's administration caused it to unravel when a stroke felled its leader in 1827. A number of Liverpool's former colleagues refused to join the government formed by George Canning in the wake of Liverpool's retirement. Canning had long supported Catholic emancipation. Soon after becoming prime minister he let it be known that he considered the question of Catholic disabilities of greater moment than the disabilities of Protestant Dissenters. William Smith, leader of the Protestant Dissenting Deputies, had expected better of Canning, whose snub moved Smith to organize a formidable propaganda campaign and petitioning effort for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Exploiting this development, Lord John Russell (a future Whig prime minister) introduced a repeal bill in the House of Commons in February 1828. By this time Canning was dead, and his ineffectual successor, Lord Goderich, had been replaced by the Duke of Wellington. Robert Peel, leader of Wellington's government in the House of Commons, could not muster sufficient numbers to defeat Russell's motion. Those who supported Catholic emancipation now saw repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts as the necessary preliminary to Catholic relief; many opponents of Catholic emancipation saw the Dissenters as potential allies in the struggle to keep Catholics out of the House of Commons. In these circumstances Wellington and Peel considered resistance to repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts pointless, and the Duke made sure the House of Lords did not thwart the will of the Commons. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 brought about the first visible fissure in the rock face of the old order. The next crack would further undermine its foundations, and reconfigure the political landscape. Grote would abandon his study and enter the political arena in response to the impact of this reconfiguration.

In summer 1828 Daniel O'Connell contested and won a by-election in County Clare. The reflexive Irish Protestant reaction to this development took

the form of anti-Catholic Brunswick clubs dedicated to resisting the claims of O'Connell's Catholic Association. O'Connell's success could presumably be replicated by Catholic candidates in other Irish counties, a prospect Wellington and Peel could not ignore; nor could they fail to notice the rising intensity of sectarian antagonism in Ireland. Only a revision of the parliamentary oath would permit O'Connell to take the seat in the House of Commons to which he had been legally elected. Peel looked for a way to bring in Catholic emancipation while giving Irish Protestants a reason to think the concession would not be fatal to the Protestant cause. In 1829 he introduced a Bill that would allow Catholics to subscribe to a revised oath; the measure, however, also called for the abolition of the forty-shilling freehold qualification in Ireland. The effect of the latter provision would be to reduce drastically Catholic participation in elections. The Bill passed the House of Commons; Wellington's stature and influence got it through the Lords. The Bill's enactment, with Whig support, incensed many Tories, who held their own leaders responsible for carrying a measure destructive of the Protestant Constitution. The rupture within Tory ranks jeopardized the survival of Wellington's government.

In November 1830 Wellington and Peel resigned in the wake of its defeat in the House of Commons. Just prior to this defeat Wellington had proclaimed his unshakeable opposition to a reform of the electoral system. By this time the issue of parliamentary reform dominated public discussion. In December 1829 Thomas Attwood had founded the Birmingham Political Union, which brought together the city's middle and working classes in support of radical electoral reform. The following months saw similar political unions spring up in a great many towns. The general election of summer 1830, necessitated by the accession of William IV, underscored the growing significance of the reform question. Although the party implications of this general election were unclear, the enhanced standing of parliamentary reform as a pressing political issue was undeniable. The revolution in Paris in July 1830 further boosted the interest in constitutional change. William IV did not share the aversion to electoral reform evinced by his predecessor. Upon the fall of Wellington and Peel, the King asked Lord Grey to form a government. Grey, a Whig elder, had been a proponent of parliamentary reform since the 1790s. The Whig-dominated coalition he put together at the end of 1830 would stake its survival on the enactment of parliamentary reform.

Worsening economic conditions added turbulence to the tense political atmosphere. Back-to-back poor harvests at the end of the 1820s brought a rapid rise in the price of bread, a rise only partially mitigated by a modest improvement in yield in 1830. High bread prices reduced demand for non-agricultural products, adversely affecting wage levels and employment opportunities.



Widespread economic hardship spawned unrest. In the summer and autumn of 1830 machine-breaking and arson convulsed the agricultural counties of southeast England. The combustible mix of a poor economy, political agitation, social disturbance, and an ill-tempered populace induced consternation within the governing classes.

"To any one who examines the signs of the times, there will appear a remarkable analogy between the present period and that which in France preceded the first French Revolution." So wrote George Grote in the Preface to his pamphlet *Essentials of Parliamentary Reform*, published soon after the formation of Grey's ministry.<sup>20</sup> Between 1823 and 1830 Grote had found time to work on his history of Greece. That work would have continued had it not been for "the signs of the times," as they struck Grote in 1830–31. These signs, laden with transformative potential, stimulated action on the part of James Mill and his associates.<sup>21</sup> On 24th January 1831 Harriet Grote reported that she and George "dined with him [James Mill] in Queen Square on Sunday, 9th January, and in consequence of his pressing request that George would put forth some thoughts on the *Essentials of Parliamentary Reform*, he [George] consented to employ the ensuing three weeks on the task."<sup>22</sup> Grote almost certainly was in a receptive state of mind. He had responded with a generous passion to the July Revolution in France, establishing a line of credit of £500 with his Paris bankers in support of "la cause de la liberté."<sup>23</sup> These dramatic political developments coincided with a change in Grote's personal circumstances that would enlarge his freedom of action. The character of Grote's professional life and the extent of his financial means had been largely defined by his father, who had disapproved of his son's radical politics. The elder Grote's death in 1830 made George a wealthy man; this financial independence made possible the political career pursued by Grote in the 1830s. To be sure, in 1830 and 1831 he had to devote much time and labor to fulfilling his duties as his father's executor. Even so, "every spare moment," Harriet Grote tells us, "was employed in aid of the movement out of doors."<sup>24</sup>

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20 "Essentials of Parliamentary Reform," in *Minor Works of George Grote*, ed. Bain, 1–55; the sentence quoted from the Preface is on p. 3.

21 For a valuable study of James Mill's response to the reform crisis of 1830–32, see Joseph Hamburger, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963).

22 Quoted in Bain, *James Mill*, 358.

23 See Harriet Grote, *Personal Life of George Grote*, 64–5, and Clarke, *George Grote*, 37.

24 Harriet Grote, *Personal Life of George Grote*, 65–6.



In *Essentials of Parliamentary Reform*, his published contribution to the movement, Grote in large measure reiterated the arguments and prescriptions set forth in *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform*. Those arguments, however, gained in urgency owing to the changed context in which they were made. Once more Grote called for a greatly expanded electorate, frequent elections, and the secret ballot. A Reform Bill should create an electorate of at least a million voters, and provision should be made for a gradual lowering of the qualification such that an electorate virtually “co-extensive with the community” should be in place within twenty or twenty-five years.<sup>25</sup> (Both James Mill and Grote understood that the idea of mass political participation made many within the middle classes queasy.) Electoral districts should be roughly equal in size; the interval between elections should be no longer than three years, with annual elections being deemed optimal; only ballots cast in secret could assure that each voter expressed his genuine preference. To both Mill and Grote the secret ballot was of paramount importance. In 1830 Mill wrote an article for the *Westminster Review* that sought to make the case for the introduction of secret voting.<sup>26</sup> There he asserted that even if nothing else were done to remedy the defects in the existing system, the adoption of secret voting would act “powerfully as an instrument of good.”<sup>27</sup> In the ultimate paragraph of *Essentials of Parliamentary Reform*, Grote declared that he “should greatly prefer 500,000 voters, qualified by superiority of income, along with the Ballot, to 2,000,000 of voters without it.”<sup>28</sup>

In his 1831 pamphlet Grote showed a characteristically Benthamite ambivalence regarding the reform credentials of the Whigs. He held that there was “much reason to fear . . . that they will apply themselves rather to clear away the obnoxious symptoms of a rotten system, than to redress the real source of the mischief.” The speeches of Whig politicians and the views on reform expressed in the *Edinburgh Review* revealed “so erroneous a conception of the real vices of our representative system, and so decided an aversion to the only effectual remedies, that gentlemen of that school can scarcely be expected to recommend any such Reform as will really impart a new heart and spirit to the Sovereign Council.” Yet Grote recognized that no worthwhile reform could be achieved except under Whig auspices, and also acknowledged the formidable

<sup>25</sup> “Essentials of Parliamentary Reform,” in *Minor Works of George Grote*, ed. Bain, 54.

<sup>26</sup> “The Ballot,” *Westminster Review* 13 (July 1830): 1–39.

<sup>27</sup> “The Ballot,” 17.

<sup>28</sup> “Essentials of Parliamentary Reform,” in *Minor Works of George Grote*, ed. Bain, 55. The number of voters in 1831, county and borough combined, was approximately 366,250. The boroughs varied enormously with respect to the number of electors.

obstacles even moderate proposals would have to surmount. Such being the case, he conceded that “[i]t will be something, indeed, to obtain even a partial Reform,” and a Whig ministry that did so “may deserve our thanks for accomplishing something widely removed from perfection.” Thanks, yes; confidence, no. The public should not mistake a Whig-sponsored measure “for the whole improvement requisite—and . . . they should continue to withhold their confidence from the Parliament until it be so elected as to afford them full and adequate securities for good government.”<sup>29</sup> The pursuit of the ballot and the problem of defining a strategy for dealing with the Whigs would be pivotal themes in the politics of the Philosophic Radicals in the decade following the enactment of the Great Reform Bill.

The Bill introduced by Grey’s government in March 1831 proposed the elimination of rotten boroughs (boroughs whose representation was controlled by a single proprietor), the enfranchisement of important towns and cities previously lacking representation, and a uniform £10 household qualification in the boroughs (male heads of households who occupied a property worth a minimum annual rental of £10 would be eligible for the vote). Grey’s ministry calculated that such a borough qualification would give the vote to the respectable middle classes while excluding the laboring classes. In the circumstances of 1831 this was a bold measure, the details of which astonished many members of the Commons when Lord John Russell explained what it contained. Only a reform on this scale, Grey and Russell believed, could restore confidence in government and preserve legitimate aristocratic influence. The Bill made no provision either for the adoption of secret voting or for more frequent elections (the Septennial Act of 1716, which stipulated that no more than seven years should elapse between elections, would remain in force). Even so, James Mill and his circle welcomed a measure whose scope exceeded their expectations.

On 22 March the second reading stage of the Reform Bill carried in the House of Commons by a single vote (302 to 301). Although reformers throughout the country celebrated this victory, a majority of one on the Bill’s principle made its survival through committee stage improbable. In response to the passage of a hostile amendment on 20 April, Grey asked the King to dissolve Parliament and call a general election. William IV complied, notwithstanding the fact that a general election had been held the previous summer. In essence, the 1831 election would be a referendum on parliamentary reform. No passive observer of these events, Grote had taken part in a large meeting of City bankers and merchants who gathered at the Mansion House in late

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29 “Essentials of Parliamentary Reform,” in *Minor Works of George Grote*, ed. Bain, 7.

March to express their strong support for the Reform Bill.<sup>30</sup> A month earlier his *Essentials of Parliamentary Reform* had met with warm praise in the radical press, the *Examiner* describing it as “a clear and able exposition of the true principles of representation” and declaring that “[s]incere reformers should make this pamphlet their manual.”<sup>31</sup> Grote’s pamphlet, his prominence in the City’s financial life, and his blend of powerful intellect and sterling character gave ample grounds for seeing him as a prospective candidate for one of the four City seats at the impending general election. The City had a broadly-based electorate, many lesser merchants, shopkeepers, and tradesmen being eligible to vote by virtue of their being freemen of the Livery Companies. On 23 April a deputation of bankers, merchants, and Livery members urged Grote to declare his candidacy. The following day the *Examiner* welcomed this development, drawing attention to Grote’s “high honour and respectability, his profound knowledge and unflinching rectitude, and his enlightened liberality of principle.”<sup>32</sup> On the 25th the *Morning Chronicle* echoed the *Examiner*, noting that Grote “has long been distinguished as a most enlightened Reformer.”<sup>33</sup>

In the end Grote did not become a candidate at the 1831 general election. Harriet Grote refers to a meeting of “some hours” that took place at James Mill’s house to consider the matter. She states that “it was decided that Mr. Grote would *not* come forward.”<sup>34</sup> The reasons for this decision she does not give. The public explanation, reported in the *Morning Chronicle* of 26 April 1831, focused on Grote’s concern to maintain unity in the ranks of reformers. Four men identified with the reform interest had already entered the field. The stakes in 1831 seemed unusually high, and Tory candidates had won two of the four City seats at the 1830 general election. Placing a premium on unity made sense in such circumstances. Personal considerations also may have played a part in the decision. Grote still had commitments at the bank, and his father’s estate had yet to be fully settled. His wife, it seems, wanted him to use his hours of leisure to further his historical scholarship. She tells us that on 1 February 1831 she wrote in her “note-book” that “[t]he ‘History of Greece’ *must* be given to the public before he [George] can embark in any active scheme of a political kind.”<sup>35</sup> Grote himself may well have doubted his fitness for public life. If James Mill thought the moment unpropitious for him to seek a seat in

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30 See *Morning Chronicle*, 26 March 1831.

31 *Examiner*, 13 Feb. 1831.

32 *Examiner*, 24 April 1831.

33 *Morning Chronicle*, 25 April 1831.

34 *Personal Life of George Grote*, 68.

35 *Personal Life of George Grote*, 67.

Parliament, Grote would have readily deferred to this judgment. In the days following the meeting at Mill's house Grote took a key role in promoting the election of the four candidates upholding the cause of reform, all of whom were returned unopposed.

Such was the public enthusiasm for the Reform Bill that the unreformed electorate delivered to Grey's government a majority of between 130 and 140. From early July through mid-September the government's second Reform Bill, which closely resembled the first, made its way through the House of Commons. On 22 September the Bill passed its final reading with a sizable majority. The following day Grote took part in a meeting of bankers and merchants at which the Lord Mayor presided. Its intention was to convey to the House of Lords the dire consequences that would ensue should that body reject the Reform Bill. The resolution Grote introduced on this occasion asserted that such action on the part of the Lords would raise "the possibility of discontent and exasperation to such a degree as would paralyse commerce, deprive the labouring population of employment, and fatally endanger public credit." Only intense public pressure on the Lords could preserve the country from the prospect of taxes being collected "by force." All now "depended upon the ardour with which the community in general, but the trading classes in particular, pressed forward to urge their claims."<sup>36</sup>

Ignoring all admonitions, the Lords made short work of the Reform Bill on 8 October. The public anger aroused by their action produced major riots in many towns, the most destructive taking place in Nottingham, Derby, and Bristol. Neither the defeat of the Bill in the Lords nor the reaction of the public surprised Grote. Two days before the peers rejected the Bill Grote wrote to Joseph Parkes, a pivotal figure in the reform agitation then gripping Birmingham (reform activity in London could not rival that of Birmingham, the nerve-center of the national movement). Parkes had told Grote of the great pro-reform demonstration hosted by Birmingham on 3 October. In his reply Grote voiced the opinion that the country was "on the eve of terrible events: at least there is the most serious reason for apprehending them, if these obstinate Peers stick to their Resolution: and they seem so profoundly ignorant of the public mind, that there is no setting any limits to their daring."<sup>37</sup>

A key figure in the organizing of pressure from without in the metropolis was Francis Place, commonly referred to as "the radical tailor of Charing Cross." An inveterate London 'wire-puller' familiar with the worlds of both working-class

<sup>36</sup> *Examiner*, 25 Sept. 1831.

<sup>37</sup> *Posthumous Papers of the late George Grote*, ed. Harriet Grote (London: Printed for Private Circulation, 1874), 39.

and middle-class radicalism, Place had close ties to Bentham, James Mill, and the Grotes. His chief concern in October 1831 was to make sure the government understood that the public would not tolerate any backsliding on the issue of reform. Public pressure had to be of sufficient force and magnitude to compel Grey and his colleagues to stand up to the House of Lords. On 12 October Place led a deputation of representatives of metropolitan parishes that presented to Grey a memorial calling for the prompt reintroduction of the Reform Bill. An absence of resolve on the government's part to adopt whatever means necessary to force the Lords to swallow the Reform Bill would "inevitably" propel the country "into all the horrors of a violent revolution."<sup>38</sup> (The only card Grey could play to overcome the intransigence of the Lords was the creation of a large number of new peers favorable to reform, a card that could not be played without the cooperation of the King.) Place did not consider Grey's response to the memorial satisfactory.<sup>39</sup> On the next day Grote took part in a meeting of City bankers and merchants. Its purpose was to express their "grief, surprise, and dismay, at the rejection of the reform bill"; to attest their "grateful confidence in His Majesty's present administration, and their fervent hopes for its continuance"; and to consider what could be done "to secure the ultimate success of the great measure of parliamentary reform" and thereby "guard against any possible violation of the public peace."<sup>40</sup> Grote himself moved a resolution asserting the hope that the King would "employ every requisite means which the constitution admits" to secure the Bill's passage. Upon his doing so hinged both "the permanent good government and . . . the present tranquillity of the kingdom."<sup>41</sup> For Place, such sentiments betokened an unmerited and unhelpful degree of confidence and trust in Grey's administration. He scolded Grote, declaring in a letter of 16 October that Grote had "trifled" both with himself "and the public. No man who is ordinarily honest ever endeavors to mislead others until he has succeeding [sic] in cheating himself, these things you did and great errors they were. If such a man as you are, can act thus how is it possible that confidence can be had in any one."<sup>42</sup> Grote rejected these imputations, telling Place that "it would have been impossible to carry the meeting along with me, had I attempted to raise mistrust of the Ministers"; most of

38 "To the Right Honourable Earl Grey," Place Papers, Add. MSS 35,149, ff. 88–89.

39 See Dudley Miles, *Francis Place 1771–1854: The Life of a Remarkable Radical* (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1988), 184.

40 *The Times*, 14 Oct. 1831.

41 *The Times*, 14 Oct. 1831.

42 Place to Grote, 16 Oct. 1831, Place Papers, British Library, Add. MS. 35149, f. 100 (Place's letter runs from f. 98 to f. 100).

those with whom Grote associated believed “the Ministry sincerely intend to bring forward again a Bill substantially similar or equivalent to the former.” Not seeing any “glaring and decisive evidence” to the contrary, Grote himself shared this belief. He would therefore do nothing “to discredit or depreciate the intentions of Ministers, solely on the basis of what passed between Lord Grey & the Parochial deputation.”<sup>43</sup>

Difference in temperament and circumstance explains this disagreement between Place and Grote. Place’s combative streak found no parallel in Grote, who preferred to think well rather than ill of Grey’s intentions. The battle-hardened veteran of a series of Westminster election contests fought against Whig candidates, Place had a lengthy history of enmity for Whiggery; unlike Place, Grote bore the Whigs no personal animosity. Grote’s experience in the City had little in common with Place’s experience in Westminster. Although his mastery of his craft had given Place a measure of economic independence, his daily life was far removed from the financial world in which Grote played an important part.<sup>44</sup> The leading bankers and merchants of the City wanted nothing to do with an agitation that conjured up the specter of violent revolution. Knowing of Place’s assault on her husband’s role in the meeting of 13 October, Harriet Grote sharply rebuked Place for his insensitivity to Grote’s situation, expostulating that “if those Bankers & traders were to get together *at all*, you must adapt your style to their stomachs. . . . Depend upon it, if you heard all that I could tell you about that meeting and its preliminaries, you’d say G. was quite in the right to do as he did.”<sup>45</sup> Grote and Place would again clash over tactics in the crisis of May 1832.

This crisis came when the House of Lords acted to wreck the third Reform Bill introduced by Grey’s government. In the autumn of 1831 neither Grey nor the King would countenance a creation of peers to get reform through the Upper House. Ministers decided to press forward with a modified Bill they hoped would attract majority support in the Lords (the chief concession reduced from 41 to 30 the number of boroughs to lose one of two members). Having won a large majority in the House of Commons, this Bill gained a majority of nine on its second reading in the House of Lords. In the first week of May 1832 a hostile amendment was carried in the Upper House. Grey responded by insisting that the King immediately create fifty new peers. William refused to accede to this demand, and Grey therefore resigned. The King then approached Wellington

43 Grote to Place, 19 Oct. 1831, Place Papers, British Library, Add. ms. 35149, ff. 105–6.

44 For an excellent examination of that financial world, see David Kynaston, *The City of London: Vol. I: A World of Its Own 1815–1890* (London: Chatto, 1994).

45 Harriet Grote to Place, 19 Oct. 1831, Place Papers, British Library, Add. ms. 35149, f. 107.

about forming a government that would sponsor a reform measure less ambitious than the one rejected by the Lords. Sympathetic to William's predicament, Wellington consented to make the attempt. These developments incited extra-parliamentary action of a kind that caused alarm in the City. Determined to stop Wellington in his tracks, Francis Place sought to manufacture a financial panic by calling upon investors to mount a run on the banks. Placards reading "TO STOP THE DUKE GO FOR GOLD" greeted Londoners as they entered the streets on the morning of 13 May. The very next day Grote wrote to Place to register his decided opposition to this undertaking, which would be "seriously injurious in every way." Members of the commercial community, he told Place, "will feel unbounded anger against the plotters & will be disposed to support that political party which is most disposed to put down those by whom the plot is got up." Grote went on to assert that "a run artificially got up will alienate numbers from the cause of Reform, & will not draw in a single partisan. This in addition to immense private mischief."<sup>46</sup> When Grote's name was bandied about as one who had sanctioned the scheme, he sent to the editors of leading London newspapers a letter that not only repudiated the charge but also condemned unequivocally the venture launched by Place.<sup>47</sup> On the morning of 15 May Wellington informed the King that he had failed to constitute a viable administration; he advised William to send for Grey. Place triumphantly informed Grote: "We may now sing, 'Glory to God in the Highest', the Bill is won, the *people's* Bill, by the *people's* minister, and all this without the aid of the City of London—'Life and Fortune' men."<sup>48</sup> Such gloating was misplaced on several counts: the important influence of the City had been brought to bear in support of the Bill (Grote himself had been a highly visible and active participant in the effort to make this influence felt);<sup>49</sup> Wellington's giving up his commission from the King had less to do with the run on the banks than with Peel's refusal to take office and the recognition that the political means required to carry out this commission were not at hand; "the *people's* Bill" produced an electorate of less than 700,000 voters (approximately 18% of adult males in England and Wales).

Place was not mistaken, however, in thinking that the Bill was won. Grey would resume his place only if William would authorize him to announce

46 Grote to Place, 14 May 1831, Place Papers, British Library, Add. ms. 35149, ff. 141–2.

47 See, for example, the *Morning Chronicle*, 16 May 1832.

48 Bain, *James Mill*, Appendix C, 453.

49 At a dinner in the City celebrating Grey's reinstatement the Lord Mayor "passed a high eulogium on his [Grote's] exertions in the City during the last two years" (*Morning Chronicle*, 24 May 1832).



that the King was ready to create as many new peers as might be necessary to assure the Bill's passage through the Lords. Unable to do without Grey, William assented. Facing the threat of a mass creation, the Lords grudgingly allowed the Bill to pass.<sup>50</sup>

The apparent passing of the old order, in circumstances featuring mass political mobilization on an unprecedented scale, spawned vastly risen expectations among reformers of all stripes. A number of men trained in the Benthamite school of politics marked the arrival of the new order by becoming candidates at the general election that occurred a mere six months after the enactment of the Reform Bill. Grote declared his candidacy for the City of London. His election address reflected the conviction of most Radicals that the era of reform had only just begun. Grote called for the enactment of the ballot and triennial elections, retrenchment in government spending and elimination of burdensome taxes (especially the so-called 'taxes on knowledge'—the stamp duty on newspapers, the paper duty, and the advertising tax), reform of the Established Church, free trade, and the abolition of slavery in the British Empire "at the earliest period consistent with the well-being of the slaves themselves."<sup>51</sup> In a field of six candidates, Grote topped the poll, winning nearly a thousand more votes than the candidate who placed second. His success stemmed not from the popularity of the specific causes he espoused but from his personal and political standing in the City. In thanking the electors, Grote declared that he "would make it his first and most fervent prayer, that their choice might be as auspicious to the City of London and the country at large as it was exulting to him."<sup>52</sup> Grote's exultation, albeit temporary, was genuine. Decades later Harriet Grote told the Amberleys that the election address he gave "when he came in for the city of London . . . was the only time Grote had been carried away by enthusiasm."<sup>53</sup> It should be borne in mind that this was an intoxicating moment for reformers, whose cause, if measured by the decimation at the

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50 The most authoritative history of the Bill's passage remains Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London: Hutchinson, 1973).

51 See the *Morning Chronicle*, 22 Oct. 1832.

52 *Morning Chronicle*, 12 Dec. 1832. The *Examiner* greeted Grote's electoral triumph as "a circumstance for the proudest exultation—exultation that we have such a man, and yet more that we have thousands capable of so justly valuing him, and placing him where his talents and excellent dispositions will be armed with power for the service of society. We can imagine no better sign of moral intelligence than this, for Mr. Grote's worth is of the kind which requires worth for its recognition." *Examiner*, 16 Dec. 1832.

53 *Amberley Papers*, vol. 1, 370.



polls of those considered anti-reformers, seemed crowned with success.<sup>54</sup> The euphoria could not last, and political resilience did not figure among Grote's salient characteristics. Agreement that reform was a good thing did not mean that reformers were of like mind with respect to the priority to be given specific reforms. Protestant Nonconformists wanted a removal of their grievances on such matters as payment of church rates, tithes, the registration of births and deaths, and access to the ancient universities; traditional Radicals demanded action on sinecures, pensions, and the national debt; working-class activists called for manhood suffrage; entrepreneurial Radicals in the Midlands and the North underscored the need to eliminate duties on imported grain. O'Connell and his Irish contingent wanted action on tithes and the Anglican Church Establishment in Ireland, along with a reconsideration of the Union between Great Britain and Ireland. For the Philosophic Radicals no reform was more urgently required than the secret ballot. There was no single Radical party, and problematic was the status of party itself in the aftermath of the passage of the Reform Act. Many held that the infirmities of the unreformed order had allowed aristocratic factions, Tory and Whig, to dominate the political system, and that the new order would render the holders of high office directly answerable to public opinion.

The new House of Commons that met in early 1833 contained some dozen members who together made up the parliamentary school of Philosophic Radicals. More a political sect than a party, the group included Grote, Charles Buller, J.A. Roebuck, Sir William Molesworth, John and Edward Romilly, Joseph Hume, Edward Strutt, Henry Warburton, and William Ewart (the general election of 1835 would add John Temple Leader and Charles Villiers to their ranks, the latter more as fellow traveler than full-fledged member). The Philosophic Radicals accepted that the Reform Act had significantly augmented the influence of public opinion, yet rejected the notion that its effect would be to cancel the illegitimate influence of the aristocracy. They aimed to bring about a further democratization of the political order through the enactment of secret voting, household suffrage, triennial parliaments, and a more equal distribution of seats. The adoption of these reforms would serve the end of aligning the representative system with the community's 'universal interest.' So long as the aristocracy retained a disproportionate share of political power, a 'sinister interest' would obstruct the effective expression of the 'universal interest.' Grote and his fellow Philosophic Radicals saw themselves as the champions

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54 When Parliament met early in 1833 the Tory opposition to Grey's government in the House of Commons numbered only about 150, the lowest figure registered by the Tories for the entire nineteenth century.

of a form of politics that would remove this obstruction and allow the public interest to secure its due.

In the *Early Draft* of his *Autobiography*, J.S. Mill says that Grote's "knowledge and abilities," coupled with his "standing and social position," should have cast him as the manifest leader of the Philosophic Radicals. Instead, he was "an inactive member of parliament," a passivity Mill ascribed to a want of "courage and energy."<sup>55</sup> There is reason to think that Mill's expectations of Grote in 1833 were not so high as to justify the tone of disappointment evident in the *Early Draft*. In a letter to Thomas Carlyle written in early August 1833 Mill observed that Grote "is by far the most *considered* of the radicals in the H. of C. [sic] is more nearly their leader than any one else, & would be so altogether but that he has not the kind of talents which fit a man for a parliamentary leader; he has not sufficient readiness, decision, & presence of mind."<sup>56</sup> It should be pointed out that in this same letter Mill described Grote as "brave";<sup>57</sup> Grote's constitutional unfitness for leadership had more to do with "energy" than with "courage." Counting for more than either, perhaps, was the fact that Grote, at

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55 *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 1, 204. It must be noted that at the time Mill composed the *Early Draft* he and Harriet Taylor Mill were estranged from the Grotes. After Harriet's death Mill renewed his friendship with the Grotes. Mill's discussion of the parliamentary performance of the Philosophic Radicals in the final version of his *Autobiography* does not single out Grote for criticism (see *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 1, 203, 205).

56 Mill to Carlyle, 2 Aug. 1833, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vols. 12–13, *The Earlier Letters of John Stuart Mill*, ed. Francis E. Mineka (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), vol. 12, 171. Harriet Grote, on the other hand, was thought by many acquainted with the Grotes to possess precisely the qualities needed for effective political leadership. Richard Cobden met the Grotes in June 1837; to his brother Frederick he wrote: "I was yesterday introduced to Mrs. and Mr. Grote at their house. I use the words Mrs. and Mr. because she is the greater politician of the two. . . . Had she been a man, she would have been the leader of a party; he is not calculated for it." (See John Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden*, 2 vols. [London: Macmillan, 1908,] vol. 1, 148.) That same year Albany Fonblanque remarked in a letter that "Mrs. Grote . . . is unfortunately more of a man, but not a better man than her husband" (see the endnotes to "New Letters of J.S. Mill to Sir William Molesworth," ed. William E.S. Thomas and Francis Mineka, *The Mill News Letter* 6 [Fall 1970], 10). Harriet Grote was very much in the thick of deliberations concerning the strategy and tactics of the Philosophic Radicals during the 1830s. Of those outside Parliament who exercised significant influence, she ranked in importance with J.S. Mill and Joseph Parkes.

57 *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 12, 170.

his core, was a patrician intellectual, not a tribune of the people.<sup>58</sup> For all these reasons he was ill-suited to become a forceful agent of radicalism in the House of Commons. He seldom intervened in debates, and his set-piece speeches on the ballot probably account for above 50% of the words he uttered in the House of Commons.<sup>59</sup> Subtract the ballot question from Grote's parliamentary career and one is left with a record essentially barren of significant political service to the Radical cause. Even with the ballot, the record is largely devoid of palpable achievement.

Be this as it may, Grote had an unequalled identification with one of the great political issues of the 1830s.<sup>60</sup> The ballot's prominence in this decade stemmed from several sources: the passage of the Reform Act stimulated the appetite for further reform; the frequency and bitterness of post-Reform-Act general elections (1832, 1835, 1837)—each revealing the persistence of widespread intimidation and corrupt practices—made plain the grave defects of the electoral system and gave the advocates of secret voting plentiful targets upon which to train their sights; the ballot's simplicity as the comprehensive remedy of these glaring defects; finally, the presence in the House of Commons of Radicals determined to press the question, the Philosophic Radicals especially.

Grote and his colleagues held that the retention of open voting enabled the aristocracy to sustain its domination of the nation's legislature through the exercise of illegitimate influence. An expanded electorate increased the number of voters subject to this influence. In introducing his 1835 ballot motion Grote declared that electors were "distinguished from their countrymen by a peculiar badge of servitude and legalized dependence. It is not they who

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58 Henry Reeve, editor of the *Edinburgh Review* between 1855 and his death forty years later, said of Grote: "Indeed the extraordinary suavity and distinction of his own manners on all occasions, the exquisite refinement of his taste, his classical culture and his love of art, gave a very aristocratic character to his social habits, which was curiously at variance with his theory of democratic government" ("Personal Memoirs of Mr. Grote," *Edinburgh Review* 138 [July 1873]: 234).

59 In taking the measure of Grote's parliamentary performance it should be noted that most members of the House of Commons rarely participated in debates, and that the 'average' member of the House was more reticent than Grote. No one, however, viewed Grote as an 'average' member; the political world he entered in 1833 expected him to become a prominent, forceful, and eloquent exponent of radical reform. His performance fell well short of the standard observers thought fit to apply to a man whose intellectual capacities were clearly of such superior quality.

60 For a study of the ballot question that says more on the subject than anyone could possibly want to know, see Bruce L. Kinzer, *The Ballot Question in Nineteenth-Century English Politics* (New York: Garland, 1982).

elect Members; it is the Aristocracy who elect by and through their voices.”<sup>61</sup> The Philosophic Radicals embraced secret voting both as a practical device for cleansing the electoral process and as a tactical instrument for exposing the factitious Whig-Tory rivalry, a rivalry whose primary function was to obscure the fundamental antagonism of interest between the aristocracy and the people. Persuaded that the formation of a Whig-Tory coalition in defense of aristocratic privilege was only a matter of time, the Philosophic Radicals conceived of the ballot question as a servant of the political realignment they sought to advance. They forecast a rupturing of the Whig party, one in which those wedded to aristocratic preeminence would join the Tories while those committed to liberal reform would constitute a distinct party under Radical leadership. This realignment would signal the arrival of a political order that faithfully reflected the division of interests within society at large. The threat to aristocratic power embodied in the ballot would ferret out those Whigs whose principal concern was to preserve the selfish interests of the aristocracy. The opposition of such men to secret voting would demonstrate to sincere reformers that Whig leaders did not merit their confidence or support. In January 1833 Grote told Joseph Parkes, “I foresee that the Ballot will become the standing mark of separation between Whigs and Radicals.”<sup>62</sup>

Between 1833 and 1839 one year only, 1834, passed without Grote bringing forward a motion proposing secret voting at parliamentary elections (sometimes in the form of a resolution, at others in the form of a request for leave to introduce a Bill). His speeches—meticulously prepared, elegantly constructed, ably delivered—imparted to their subject the orator’s own dignity and high-mindedness.<sup>63</sup> They did not, in the main, place the issue in the context of a struggle for power. Instead Grote emphasized the need to establish conditions that would enable each voter to express freely his true preference. An electoral system that denied such expression contravened the purposes of representative government. The practice of open voting encouraged powerful forces to act upon the hopes and fears of electors. Election agents who engaged in extensive bribery of electors depended on the publicity of the vote, without which they would have no means of knowing whether or not the recipients of their corrupt inducements had fulfilled their end of the bargain. Intimidation

61 *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 28 (2 June 1835), col. 393.

62 Grote to Parkes, Jan. 1833, Grote Papers, British Library, Add. Ms. 46691, f. 3.

63 In an *Edinburgh Review* article prompted by the publication of Harriet Grote’s life of her husband, Henry Reeve described Grote’s ballot speeches as “elaborate, correct and impressive, sometimes even ingenious and persuasive” (“Personal Memoirs of Mr. Grote,” *Edinburgh Review* 138 [July 1873]: 232).

practiced by landlords against tenants, employers against employees, customers against shopkeepers, would be rendered pointless by the adoption of secret voting. In 1833 Grote estimated that something like one-half of all electors “are unable to call their votes their own.”<sup>64</sup> In almost all of his speeches Grote insisted that secret voting would virtually eradicate the exercise of undue influence while leaving intact and heightening the authority of all legitimate sources of influence—the responsible use of wealth, generosity, intellectual superiority, and exemplary moral conduct. Everything he said regarding the ballot’s properties as an instrument for ridding the electoral system of its prevalent deformities was said with conviction. Given that most members of the House of Commons had ties to the landed classes, it made little sense for Grote to give high visibility to the ballot’s identity as an indispensable tool for dismantling aristocratic power.

Anyone paying attention to developments in the Philosophical Radical camp in 1835 could not fail to grasp that a dismantling of that power was the principal aim of Grote and his colleagues. In that year the *London Review* was established as an organ of Philosophic Radicalism, with J.S. Mill as its de facto editor. In his article “Parliamentary Proceedings of the Session,” Mill claimed that retention of open voting would produce a Tory-dominated Parliament within two to three years. The Whig ministers had to decide “whether they will support the ballot, or abandon office to the Tories, or coalesce with the Tories on their own terms.” Each of the Whigs would have to answer the question: “Who is for the aristocracy and who for the people?”<sup>65</sup> Also in 1835 J.A. Roebuck brought out his *Pamphlets for the People*, one of whose themes was the need both for the ballot and for the formation of a Radical party of sufficient strength to break the grip of the aristocracy on the political system. Although Grote’s ballot speeches would largely refrain from linking the adoption of secret voting to an assault on the aristocratic order, Westminster politicians had no excuse for missing the connection. Small wonder the opponents of secret voting became as forceful in their denunciation of the ballot as the Philosophic Radicals were in their advocacy of the measure.<sup>66</sup> This reaction, in turn, reinforced the premise of the Philosophic Radicals that no other issue was so well suited for throwing into sharp relief the divide between true Tories and genuine reformers.

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64 *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 17 (25 April 1833), col. 611.

65 “Parliamentary Proceedings of the Session,” *London Review* 1 (July 1835), 516; reprinted in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 6, *Essays on England, Ireland, and the Empire*, ed. John M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 300.

66 For an examination of the opposition to the ballot, see Kinzer, *Ballot Question*, 20–33.

Grote's 1833 ballot motion was defeated by a large margin, 211 to 106.<sup>67</sup> Grey's government called for its rejection, and most members of the House thought it far too soon after the enactment of the Reform Bill to embrace further major changes in the electoral system. Grote's 1835 motion, introduced in the aftermath of the general election held in January of that year, won an additional forty adherents; the number opposed to the ballot, however, increased by over a hundred.<sup>68</sup> This gain for its opponents stemmed from the rise in Tory members produced by the 1835 election. Political developments of late 1834 and early 1835 had inflicted a shocking setback on pro-reform forces. These forces had welcomed Lord John Russell's announcement in May 1834 of his support for lay appropriation of the surplus revenues of the Anglican Church in Ireland. This declaration, however, prompted the resignation of four members of Grey's administration. In July Grey himself retired, and the King invited Grey's colleague Lord Melbourne to form a government. In November William IV, disturbed by what he took to be the increasingly radical disposition of the Whig administration, dismissed Melbourne. The King then turned to Wellington, who urged William to summon Peel to form a government. Peel accepted this commission, asked the King to dissolve Parliament, and led the Tories into an election that brought about a dramatic improvement in their organization, morale, and parliamentary position. Only a unified front of Whigs, Radicals, and O'Connell's Irish contingent could both dislodge Peel and put in place an effective and stable center-left government. This tactical alliance came about in March 1835, and drove Peel from office shortly thereafter. Melbourne and Russell would be William's ministers whether he wanted them or not. Peel now led a formidable opposition in the Commons, and Wellington could rely on a large majority in the House of Lords. Grote did not want to be responsible for wrecking the government and allowing the Tories to take power.

Grote himself lost ground in the City in the election of January 1835. His share of the total vote fell by over 8%, and he dropped from first to fourth place. The enthusiasm his candidacy had kindled in 1832 had diminished a good deal by early 1835. Inasmuch as no Tory was returned by the City of London in this election, the result apparently had less to do with the nationwide swing towards Peel and the Conservatives than with Grote's lethargic performance in the House. Easily disheartened, Grote could take little comfort in the events of late 1834 and early 1835.

From early 1835 through most of 1837 Grote refrained from taking action that would endanger Melbourne's government. If the choice was between

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67 See *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 17 (25 April 1833), col. 667.

68 See *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 28 (2 June 1835), col. 471.

Whigs and Tories, Grote would choose the former. In February 1835 Grote told the House of Commons that he “could not consent, Reformer as he was, to look for a Ministry in the ranks of those [the Tories] who were and had ever been much more opposed to Reform than any other party of their day.” In the same speech he declared that “the Government of Lord Grey was never equaled by any Government which preceded it”; its members “were the best Ministers the country had ever had.”<sup>69</sup> The Reform Act; the abolition of slavery in the British Empire; a reform of the Irish Church; the enactment of a New Poor Law founded on principles endorsed by the Philosophic Radicals—all this had been accomplished before Grey’s retirement in summer 1834. Soon after Grey’s departure, Lord John Russell, who would lead Melbourne’s government in the House of Commons, had shown a readiness to use parliamentary authority to claim for worthy lay purposes the surplus revenue of the Irish Church. The center-piece of the government’s legislative program in 1835, however, was a matter the Philosophic Radicals deemed even more pressing—the reform of municipal corporations. Melbourne’s government proposed the democratic election of local councils in the corporate boroughs of England and Wales. The borough corporations existing before 1835 had in the main been controlled by entrenched Tory-Anglican interests answerable to no one but themselves. Radicals of all stripes applauded the intent and the substance of this major reform. Although reformers took the government to task for its pusillanimous treatment of a number of amendments insisted upon by the House of Lords, the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 greatly extended the application of the representative principle.<sup>70</sup> Philosophic Radicals also found good value in the legislation of 1836 that provided for the civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths. The Whigs, to be sure, remained unforthcoming with respect to the ballot; even so, Melbourne and his colleagues had done enough to retain Grote’s tepid support. He probably hoped the Whigs would give him no compelling reason to act against them. Any form of sustained political action at this juncture held no attraction for Grote. As of summer 1836 he did not have to be concerned about disappointing James Mill, who lay dying as Grote gave his ballot speech in June of that year.<sup>71</sup> Grote’s inactivity exasperated Roebuck, who in January 1837 told his wife that Grote “himself causes his own eclipse. If he would *do* anything, his reward in praise and esteem would be boundless.”<sup>72</sup>

69 See *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 26 (24 Feb. 1835), cols. 189 and 191.

70 For Grote’s criticism of the government’s handling of the Lords’ amendments, see *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 30 (31 Aug. 1835), cols. 1159–61.

71 See Bain, *James Mill*, 409.

72 R.E. Reader, *Life and Letters of John Arthur Roebuck* (London: Arnold, 1897), 87.



It was not simply that Grote was punching below his weight; he seemed indisposed to strike at all.

Near the end of 1837 the government showed an unwillingness to let Grote continue his political slumber. The death of William and accession of Victoria mandated yet another general election in the summer of that year. The Conservatives added to the gains they had made in 1835, leaving Melbourne's government with a very slim majority in the House of Commons. Radicals fared poorly at this election, with J.A. Roebuck, Joseph Hume, and William Ewart, among others, losing their seats. Grote once again finished fourth in the City's parliamentary contest. Charles Greville, an astute observer of the political scene, noted in his journal that "the Radicals being so reduced in numbers . . . must support them [the ministers], and cannot expect any concessions in return."<sup>73</sup> Grote evidently saw things differently. A few days after Greville recorded his judgment, Grote told a correspondent: "I do not see how one of the two alternatives can be avoided—either a coalition of some sort between Whigs and Tories, or else a farther reform of the Representative system."<sup>74</sup> Melbourne and Russell had no intention of forming a coalition with the Tories; neither did they intend to sanction further organic reform. When Parliament met in the second half of November, Russell declared the government's unequivocal opposition to franchise extension, the ballot, and triennial parliaments. Insofar as the fundamentals of the electoral system were concerned, he deemed the 1832 Reform Act a "final" measure.<sup>75</sup> In response Grote denied any intrinsic connection between the ballot and these other reforms, and said that the "hopes which they entertained of his Lordship's Government would be destroyed by that declaration."<sup>76</sup>

Most Radicals comported themselves as Greville had predicted; Grote, Molesworth, and Leader, along with a few others, did not. On 19 December 1837 Grote delivered a major speech denouncing the retention of pensions in the Civil List Bill proposed by the government.<sup>77</sup> The next month he opposed the ministry's suspension of the Canadian constitution in response to the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada of late 1837.<sup>78</sup> These actions, however,

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73 *The Greville Memoirs (Second Part): A Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1852*, ed. Henry Reeve, 3 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1885), vol. 1, 14 (28 July 1837).

74 Grote to Henry Brougham, 31 July 1837, Brougham Papers, University College London.

75 *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 39 (20 Nov. 1837), cols. 69–70.

76 *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 39 (21 Nov. 1837), col. 109.

77 *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 39 (19 Dec. 1837), cols. 1279–1298.

78 *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 40 (16 Jan. 1838, 23 Jan. 1838, and 29 Jan. 1838), cols. 59–65, 399–406, and 633–38.



had no implications for the government's ability to carry on. In May 1839 Grote did figure in the unfolding of a political crisis. In that month Melbourne's administration sought parliamentary sanction for suspension of the Jamaican constitution. Grote expressed hostility to this move, and joined nine other Radicals in voting against the government.<sup>79</sup> These votes, together with those of the Tory opposition, reduced the government's majority to five in a very large House (nearly 600 members took part in the vote). Melbourne considered the margin of victory too small to justify the retention of office. The resignation of his government led to the so-called Bedchamber Crisis, in which the Queen's objection to replacing her Whig Ladies of the Bedchamber with Tory Ladies prevented Peel from forming a government. Although the Whigs returned to office, the part played by Grote and other Philosophic Radicals in precipitating Melbourne's resignation further damaged their already weak standing both in the House and with the public.

None of this should be taken to mean that Grote became a more assertive presence in the House of Commons. Few debates elicited his participation. Disgusted with politics, Grote in early 1838 spoke of the "degeneracy of the Liberal party and their passive acquiescence in everything, good or bad, which emanates from the present Ministry"; he saw nothing to be gained in "nightly attendance in Parliament for the simple purpose of sustaining *Whig* Conservatism against *Tory* Conservatism"; he hoped the time would soon come when his "unfinished Greek History" would again become his chief occupation.<sup>80</sup> Nothing that happened between early 1838 and late 1839 caused Grote to think differently. In August 1839 he told a correspondent: "Such times only make me wish to get back to my books and my thoughts, which I hope I shall before very long be enabled to do."<sup>81</sup>

His malaise notwithstanding, Grote honored his commitment to the ballot cause. The issue seemed to be gaining greater political purchase. Grote's 1837 ballot motion secured the support of 155 members in a House of over 400. Tories constituted the vast majority of the 267 who opposed the motion.<sup>82</sup> During the 1837 parliamentary session the House of Commons received 311 pro-ballot petitions containing 147,556 signatures; in the next session (21 November 1837 to 16 August 1838), the respective totals were 365 and 181,506. Many successful candidates at the 1837 general election pledged themselves to support Grote's ballot motion. A large outpouring of ballot pamphlets,

79 For Grote's speech, see *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 47 (6 May 1839), cols. 887–96; for the division, see cols. 967–972.

80 Grote to John Austin, quoted in Clarke, *George Grote*, 60.

81 Quoted in Hamburger, *Intellectuals in Politics*, 267n.

82 See *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 37 (7 March 1837), col. 67.

for and against, sought a public audience in 1837 and 1838.<sup>83</sup> In February 1838 Grote initiated the ballot debate of that year in a major speech whose eloquence and force were undeniable. A debate of several hours ensued, after which Grote's motion was defeated by a vote of 317 to 200 (few political issues had the capacity to attract a House of over 500 members).<sup>84</sup> Of those who opposed the motion, only some 60 were Whigs and Liberals, a goodly proportion of this total consisting of office-holders. Eight members of the government did not participate in the division, and two others actually voted for the motion. Support for the ballot in the House of Commons had nearly doubled since 1833.

Why should Grote not have been heartened by such developments on the ballot front? For one thing, the most formidable members of Melbourne's administration had not softened their opposition to secret voting; for another, as Grote noted in the same month of the ballot debate, "Toryism" was "regaining its ascendancy."<sup>85</sup> A combination of growing Conservative strength and continued Whig hostility meant that the ballot motion stood no chance of passing the House of Commons, let alone the Tory-dominated House of Lords. More distressing yet was the realization that the vast majority of ballot-supporters remained wedded to Melbourne's ministry. The Philosophic Radicals had conceived of the ballot question as the means by which to drive a wedge between sham and true reformers, and thereby bring about a political realignment corresponding to the divide between the aristocracy and 'the people.' The moderate reformers who made up the great bulk of those supporting Grote's ballot motion in 1838 did not share this understanding of what needed to happen. Moreover, as memories of the 1837 general election began to fade, so too did public interest in the ballot. Although a gravely weak Whig ministry made the ballot an open question in spring 1839, Grote recognized that the existing political order could not accommodate an influential Radical party. In June 1839 Grote brought forward his ballot motion for the last time. He did so, according to Harriet Grote, "not so much because he hoped for any success, as because some members wished for the opportunity of voting in favour of it, in order to satisfy their constituents. . . . The flatness of the debate itself was incontestable."<sup>86</sup> The concession made by the government in declaring the ballot an open question produced only a marginal increase in the size of the minority (from 200 to 216).

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83 For a discussion of these developments, see Kinzer, *Ballot Question*, 37–8.

84 For this debate, see *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 40 (15 Feb. 1838), cols. 1131–1225.

85 Grote to John Austin, February 1838, quoted in Clarke, *George Grote*, 60.

86 Harriet Grote, *Personal Life of George Grote*, 131.

Grote did not stand as a candidate at the 1841 general election, which yielded a decisive Conservative majority. The school of politics with which he had identified himself had misconstrued the political dynamics at work in English society. 'The people,' conceived by the Philosophic Radicals as the political force antagonistic to the aristocracy, existed only as an imagined construct. The aristocracy, on the other hand, was real enough. The character of the early-Victorian social order and political structure necessitated aristocratic leadership. After 1832 both Whig and Tory leaders understood the need to give a measure of satisfaction to a political public within which the middle classes had assumed a prominent place. Agreeing on the imperative of preserving aristocratic influence, Whigs and Tories often disagreed on the means best adapted to accomplish this end. Their differences, in certain respects, corresponded to differences in the wider public, a correspondence that helped sustain the viability of the existing order. Most of those who made up the English middle classes were prepared to acquiesce in continued aristocratic leadership provided this leadership demonstrated the capacity to transcend its own narrow sectional interests. The English governing classes often met this challenge after 1832. Grote and his colleagues adhered to a doctrine that enabled them to believe they had a national constituency in 'the people.' No such constituency existed, and they could do nothing to create it. The mature reflections of J.S. Mill on the fate of the Philosophic Radicals bear repeating: "Their lot was cast in the ten years of inevitable reaction, when the Reform excitement was over, and the few legislative improvements which the public really called for having been rapidly effected, power gravitated back in its natural direction, to those who were for keeping things as they were."<sup>87</sup> This being so, Grote got back to his books and his thoughts. The volume in which this essay appears exists because he did so.

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87 *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 1, 203, 205.

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# James Mill and George Grote: A Benthamite Defence of “Theoretic Reform”

*Antis Loizides*

This chapter explores the intellectual context and relationship of two seminal figures involved in the Benthamite-radical movement for reform, James Mill and George Grote. The common perception is that Grote was guided by the elder Mill to carry out the Philosophic Radicals’ pragmatic goals. Against this trend, two key-texts are given particular attention: Mill’s “Government” (1820) and Grote’s *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform* (1821).<sup>1</sup> Grote’s pamphlet is largely referred to as “heavily indebted for its arguments and even its phraseology” to James Mill’s essay “Government” (1820)—in this regard, it is not surprising that within the “Radical” circle it was thought to have been written by Mill himself.<sup>2</sup> However, a closer look at the circumstances surrounding the publication of Grote’s pamphlet suggests greater originality than is usually allowed to Grote.

## 1

Upon the publication of the first volumes of George Grote’s *History of Greece* (1846–1856), Harriet Lewin Grote was told that “since Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*

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- 1 For discussions of other parts of their intellectual relationship, see Kyriakos N. Demetriou, “The Development of Platonic Studies and the Role of the Utilitarians,” *Utilitas* 8, no. 1 (1996): 15–37; John Vaio, “George Grote and James Mill: How to Write History,” in *George Grote Reconsidered*, William M. Calder and Stephen Trzaskoma, ed. (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1996), 59–74.
  - 2 William Thomas, “The ‘Essay on Government’ and the Movement for Reform,” *Historical Journal* 12, no. 2 (1969): 264. The owner (signed T. Holt-White) of a copy of Grote’s *Statement*, donated to the Goldsmith Library, noted: “Mr. Cartwright [the known political reformer] told me, that this Tract was written by Mr. James Mill, A Writer in the Edinburgh Review, & Author of a work intitled, ‘the History of British India’ (see also, Robert A. Fenn, *James Mill’s Political Thought* [New York: Garland Publishing, 1987], 112n18). The owner, Thomas Holt-White (1763–1841), had loaned Jeremy Bentham two volumes of assorted “Tracts on Parliamentary Reform.” See Bentham’s letter to T. Holt-White, 10 Apr. 1819, in *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham. Vol. IX; January 1817–December 1820*, ed. S. Conway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, 331.

of the Roman Empire, no book [had] made so great an impression on the learned world" as her husband's work. Similarly, James Mill's *The History of British India* (1818), "though certainly not free from fault," was also thought to be "on the whole, the greatest historical work which has appeared in our language since that of Gibbon." Both works had "safely established" their authors' "reputation for learning."<sup>3</sup> However, the similarities in the contemporary reception of their historical works do not extend to their posthumous fame.

On one hand, neither did Mill's *British India* nor his *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829)—not to mention the *Fragment on Mackintosh* (1835)—have kept his name from falling into oblivion. Still, a couple of essays published in the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the periodical press of the day have attracted some interest. But perhaps without Thomas Babington Macaulay's critique of utilitarian politics and method, Mill would be perhaps completely forgotten as an independent thinker, merely surviving to this day as the mouthpiece of Jeremy Bentham and the father of John Stuart Mill—the cause of strain to that "overstrained infant."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Grote's *History* as well as *Plato, and the other Companions of Sokrates* (1865)—contrary to his works on reform—have extended his fame long after they were published. Not only did these works lead to a regeneration of the study of ancient Greek thought in the nineteenth century—particularly Plato's—, but also, what is most important, scholars still find them highly original and instructive.<sup>5</sup>

3 H. Grote to F. Lewin-von Koch, 18 Jun. 1846, in Thomas Herbert Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, 2 vols. (London: Archibald Constable, 1909), vol. 1, 41. See also, Thomas Babington Macaulay, "The East India Company" (10 July 1833), in *Speeches, Parliamentary and Miscellaneous by the Rt. Hon. Thomas Babington Macaulay*, 2 vols. (London: Vizetelly, 1853), vol. 2, 172.

4 H. Grote to A. Bain, 24 Oct. 1873, in Lewin, *Lewin Letters*, vol. 2, 318. For Macaulay's first and ensuing essays on utilitarian politics, see *Utilitarian Logic and Politics*, ed. Jack Lively and John Rees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

5 See Kyriakos N. Demetriou, ed., *Classics in the Nineteenth Century: Responses to George Grote* (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004). See also, Terence H. Irwin, "Mill and the Classical World," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mill*, ed. John M. Skorupski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 423–63; Malcolm Schofield, *Plato: Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Paul Cartledge, "Introduction," in George Grote, *History of Greece*, ed. J.M. Mitchell and M.O.B. Caspari (New York: Routledge), ix–xx; Arnaldo D. Momigliano, "George Grote and the Study of Greek History" (UCL Inaugural Lecture, 1952). See further, Kyriakos N. Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy: A Study in Classical Reception* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 273. Grote's work on Aristotle, the last of the "trilogy" (Harriet Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote* [London: John Murray, 1873], 277), was left incomplete due to his death. It left great promise of what was about to follow. See John Stuart Mill, "Grote's Aristotle" (1873), in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*,

Reviewers of Harriet Grote's *The Personal Life of George Grote* (1873) found the opportunity of recounting how, from the moment Mill and Grote met, "the remainder of [Grote's] mental career [followed] almost as a matter of course"—implying, now a commonplace view regarding Grote's early career, that their relation was a "master-apprentice" one.<sup>6</sup> But it is not clear when James Mill met George Grote; they were introduced through David Ricardo with whom Grote himself became acquainted in 1817. Given Harriet Grote's retelling of the story, in which Grote met Mill around the time of the latter's appointment at East India Company (which took place on 12 May 1819), their meeting most likely took place in 1819. Not only does a letter from Grote to George Warde Norman in May 1819 points to a rather recent acquaintance—as Martin L. Clarke seems justified to infer—but also Grote's diary mentions two meetings with Mill on the 23rd and 28th of March of the same year, but no meeting appears in the extant diary before those dates.<sup>7</sup>

The timing of their acquaintance itself is interesting due to a connection to James Mill's employment to East India Company. It is well known that Mill was nominated for the position of Assistant to the Examiner of India Correspondence when the post became available. As Bain noted in his biography of the elder Mill, all his friends with influence to the India House tried to secure the position to him (his financial difficulties were no secret)—the canvassing beginning in the early months of 1819. It was around this time that Ricardo turned to Grote to ask for help as well. Though it would cast the "master-apprentice" relation between the two under a different light, no evidence exists that Grote's help tipped the scale in Mill's favour. There is some evidence suggesting that Mill already enjoyed the support of high-ranking officials at India House, being the author of a recently published

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ed. John M. Robson et al., 33 vols. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1963–91), vol. II, 473–510 (hereafter cited as *cw* followed by volume and page number).

- 6 John Owen, "George Grote," *The Theological Review* 10, no. 43 (1873): 505–8. For some examples of the traditional view of the Mill-Grote relationship, which follow closely Harriet Grote's own account of it (*Life*, 20–3), see [Anon.], "George Grote," *London Quarterly Review* 42, no. 84 (1874): 398; [Reeve, Henry], "Personal Memoir of George Grote," *Edinburgh Review* 138, no. 281 (1873): 223ff; [Anon.], "George Grote," *Quarterly Review* 135, no. 269 (1873): 104–6, 109; [Hare, Thomas], "The Personal Life of George Grote," *Westminster Review* 44, no. 1 (1873): 138–9.
- 7 H. Grote, *Life*, 21, 36–7; John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (1873), *cw*, vol. 1, 75. Cf. Alexander Bain, *James Mill; A Biography* (London: Longmans, Green, 1882), 180–2, 181n. See also, Martin L. Clarke, *George Grote; A Biography* (London: Athlone Press, 1961), 19–21.



authoritative history of British India. At least, this was what Mill himself thought to be the reason for his appointment.<sup>8</sup>

Under whatever circumstances the two men met, Grote, though at first resistant to James Mill's "domineering" tone, as the story goes,<sup>9</sup> rather soon came completely "under the spell of [his] conversation."<sup>10</sup> For example, reminiscing to a friend, Harriet Grote reportedly said that she and her husband "lived in two worlds—'the ancient and the modern.' Plato and Aristotle on the one side, Kant and Bentham, and James Mill on the other."<sup>11</sup> Likewise, John Stuart Mill called Grote in 1833 in a letter to Thomas Carlyle, "more of a disciple of [his] father than anyone else." Years later, in his *Autobiography* (1873), John Mill noted that though Grote was "[a]lready a highly instructed man," when he met James Mill, "he was yet, by the side of my father, a tyro on the great subjects of human opinion: but he rapidly seized on my father's best ideas."<sup>12</sup> When in 1838—two years after the elder Mill's death—William Molesworth had written to Grote to inform him of his intention to dedicate his upcoming edition of Thomas Hobbes's works to him, Grote kindly accepted but told Molesworth

8 Bain, *James Mill*, 183, 185 (for Mill's financial difficulties, see *ibid.* 59–61, 65–70); Graham Wallas, *The Life of Francis Place 1771–1854* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1898 [rev. ed. 1918]), 78–79. Grote's family must have had considerable influence in the India House, given that four of Grote's brothers and his brother-in-law had made civil and military careers in India (see Clarke, *Grote*, 3–4, 3n4). This could have been the reason why Ricardo turned to Grote for support. Around this time, Grote read a review of Mill's *History* in January 1819 ([Coulson, Walter], "Mill's *British India*," *Edinburgh Review* 31, no. 61 (1818): 1–44); see, H. Grote, *Life*, 34. In any case, Mill thought that the Directors of the East India Company appointed him because of George Canning's support. See John Bowring, ed. *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, 11 vols. (Edinburgh: William Tate, 1838–43), vol. 9, 483; see also Bain, *James Mill*, 142n; cf. J. Mill to E. Dumont, 13 Dec. 1819, in *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, ed. P. Sraffa, 11 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004 [or. ed. 1951–1977]), vol. 11, 40n1. George Canning did not cave in when pressure was exerted on him to reject Mill because of his radicalism. See H.W.V. Temperley, *Life of Canning* (London: James Finch and Co., 1905), 262; Robert Bell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. George Canning* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1846), 272–3.

9 See Grote's letter to G.W. Norman (May 1819), in which Grote complained that James Mill's "mind has, indeed, all that cynicism and asperity which belong to the Benthamian school, and what I chiefly dislike in him is, the readiness and seeming preference with which he dwells on the *faults* and *defects* of others—even of the greatest men!" (in H. Grote, *Life*, 21; see also *ibid.* 22ff.). The description of James Mill's tone as "domineering" is Bentham's, see *Works*, vol. 9, 450.

10 H. Grote, *Life*, 21; Bain, *James Mill*, 181–2. See also, Clarke, *Grote*, 19–21.

11 Elizabeth Eastlake, *Mrs Grote: A Sketch* (London: John Murray, 1880), 43.

12 J.S. Mill to T. Carlyle, 2 Aug. 1833, *cw*, vol. 12, 170–1; *Autobiography*, *cw*, vol. 1, 74–5.



that "[o]ur poor friend and instructor, old Mill—*utinam viveret!*—he was the man to whom such a dedication would have been more justly due."<sup>13</sup>

That Grote was never reluctant to acknowledge his "debt" to the elder Mill seems the main reason why Mill's intellectual sway over Grote has been largely considered to be a fact. In 1866, on occasion of a review of John Stuart Mill's *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865), Grote took the opportunity to fulfil "another obligation" by giving one of his "unexceptional eulog[ies]"<sup>14</sup> with regard to James Mill's "high merits." Having just surveyed Mill's primary writings with unreserved praise, Grote noted:

His unpremeditated oral exposition was hardly less effective than his prepared work with the pen; his colloquial fertility on philosophical subjects, his power of discussing himself, and of stimulating others to discuss, his ready responsive inspirations through all the shifts and windings of a sort of Platonic dialogue, all these accomplishments were, to those who knew him, even more impressive than what he composed for the press. Conversation with him was not merely instructive, but provocative to the dormant intelligence. Of all persons whom we have known, Mr. James Mill was the one who stood least remote from the lofty Platonic ideal of Dialectic—*Τοῦ διδόναι καὶ δέχεσθαι λόγον* (the giving and receiving of reasons) competent alike to examine others, or to be examined by them on philosophy. When to this we add a strenuous character, earnest convictions, and single-minded devotion to truth, with an utter disdain of mere paradox, it may be conceived that such a man exercised powerful intellectual ascendancy over younger minds.

Grote was one of the elder Mill's acquaintances who remembered and attested such "intellectual ascendancy" with gratitude, owing "to the historian of British India an amount of intellectual stimulus and guidance such as he can never forget."<sup>15</sup>

13 G. Grote to W. Molesworth, 28 Oct. 1838, in H. Grote, *Life*, 129. As G.H. Lewes reported, James Mill was the "first person who saw his [Hobbes's] importance as a political thinker, and had the courage to proclaim it": George Henry Lewes, *The Biographical History of Philosophy; From its origin in Greece down to the Present Day*, Library ed. (New York: Appleton and Co., 1857), 495.

14 Bain, *James Mill*, 181.

15 George Grote, "Review of John Stuart Mill on the Philosophy of Sir William Hamilton" (1866), in *The Minor Works of George Grote*, ed. Alexander Bain (London: John Murray, 1873), 283–5. John Mill was very pleased with Grote for "doing justice" to his father, see the letters to Grote on 26 Nov. 1865 and 4 Feb 1866 (cw, vol. 16, 1121 and 1144).

Grote repaid his debt. Prior to his public expression of gratitude, James Mill was almost completely forgotten. In 1854, less than twenty years after James Mill's death, the younger Mill complained that "[t]here is hardly a more striking example of the worthlessness of posthumous reputation than the oblivion into which my father has fallen among the world at large," and asked himself: "Who was ever better entitled to take his place among the great names of England?"<sup>16</sup> Grote's brief notice of admiration inaugurated a torrent of works breathing new life into the elder Mill. John Stuart Mill's edition of his father's *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1869) and the younger Mill's own *Autobiography* (1873), Bain's edition of *The Minor Works of George Grote* (1873), with a commentary on Grote's intellectual development, as well as Harriet Grote's *The Personal Life of George Grote* (1873), did much to rehabilitate the elder Mill's posthumous fame—and so did the numerous reviews of those works in periodicals and newspapers:

Almost all the workers of his generation turned to James Mill for council and aid. Bentham made him his right hand; Romilly and Brougham invariably turned to him for advice; Ricardo would not have published but for his pressure; Grote recognized in him his intellectual father; Fonblanque and Black sat at his feet; Joseph Hume was an old schoolfellow, and got his few ideas from him; the early advocates of education, Allen and Lancaster, found in him a warm supporter; the first *Westminster Review* was dominated by him; in short, no considerable movement in the early years of the century was outside the unobtrusive yet substantial influence of the elder Mill.<sup>17</sup>

Though the reviewer seemed to simply echo George Grote's, Alexander Bain's and John Stuart Mill's view that the elder Mill's "influence flowed in minor streams too numerous to be specified,"<sup>18</sup> a few years earlier, in 1879, Walter Bagehot had found a

16 J.S. Mill, Diary Entry: 12 Jan. 1854, *cw*, vol. 17, 642. Grote felt exactly the same way on Mill's fate. Writing to John Mill in 1865 about what he intended to do, he noted: "It has always rankled in my thoughts, that so grand and powerful a mind as his left behind it such insufficient traces in the estimation of successors" (20 Nov. 1865, in H. Grote, *Life*, 278).

17 [Anon.] "Literature," *The Athenaeum* 2831 (28 Jan. 1882): 117–8.

18 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *cw*, vol. 1, 93.

vivid picture [...] in the reminiscences of a few old men, who still linger in London society, and who are fond of recalling the doctrines of their youth, though probably they now no longer believe them. James Mill must have pre-eminently possessed the Socratic gift of instantaneously exciting and permanently impressing the minds of those around him.<sup>19</sup>

These and other testimonies of James Mill's "Socratic gift" show that, whatever one made of James Mill's originality as a writer—which remains a contested issue—, his advice was sought for and listened to.<sup>20</sup>

However, not much survives of what the elder Mill thought of Grote. It seems that he held Grote in high regard. Grote's published papers were referred to in his *Commonplace Books* and Grote's manuscripts were given to the youthful John Stuart for study—the latter especially constituted an honour shared with only a handful of contemporaries, including individuals such as Jeremy Bentham and David Ricardo.<sup>21</sup> What is perhaps more indicative of the elder Mill's opinion of Grote is that, in 1821, he recommended Grote to Macvey Napier as a possible contributor for the *Supplement* to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

By the by, there is a friend of mine who has written a very learned, and, what is more, a truly philosophical discourse on the subject of Magic, which he would be very happy to have printed in your work. From the

19 Walter Bagehot, *Economic Studies* (1879), in *The Works and Life of Walter Bagehot*, ed. Emilie Isabel Barrington, 10 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1915), vol. 7, 231.

20 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *cw*, vol. 1, 91–3. See William Ellis's 1873 note of gratitude to James Mill and the notices of James Mill's death in 1836 in Bain, *James Mill*, 182n, 456 ff. (appendix D). Mill's obituary in the *Examiner* (26 Jun. 1836) called him a "master-mind" and John Black in the *Morning Chronicle* (25 Jun. 1836) had called him "one of those men who stamp a new character on their age." See also Millicent Fawcett, *Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir William Molesworth* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 66; J.A. Stewart, "Literature," *The Academy* 514 (11 Mar 1882): 167–8; [Anon.] "Professor Bain's Studies of James Mill and John Stuart Mill," *Modern Review* 3, no. 2 (Apr 1882): 423–5; J.S. Stuart-Glennie, "James and John Stuart Mill Traditional and Personal Memorials," *Macmillan's Magazine* 45, no. 270 (1882): 490–9; T.H.S. Escott, "The Life of James Mill," *Fortnightly Review* 31, no. 184 (1882): 476–504; [Anon.] "James Mill," *The Pall Mall Gazette* 5294 (14 Feb. 1882): 5.

21 For example, see J. Mill, *Commonplace Books* (hereafter *CPB*), ed. Robert A. Fenn, 5 vols. (vols. 1–4 published by SCIH and London Library can be accessed at <http://www.intellectualhistory.net/mill/>; vol. 5 is located in the Mill-Taylor Collection, LSE Archives. The online edition was co-edited by Kris Grint); vol. 1, f. 179r; vol. 2, ff. 79v–80r. See also, J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *cw*, vol. 1, 72 (early draft).

specimen I have seen, it will prove, I think, not only instructive, but amusing. I am not at liberty to mention the name of the author. He is a young City banker, and the son of a man who is an eminent banker, and is a very extraordinary person, in his circumstances, both for knowledge and clear vigorous thinking.<sup>22</sup>

As “James Mill [was] no flatterer,”<sup>23</sup> the above estimate of George Grote was probably as laudatory as it could get.

## 2

In his classic work on philosophic radicalism, Elie Halévy noted that “at the time when Utilitarianism was an organised philosophy and not merely a current opinion, to be a Utilitarian it was necessary to be a Radical.”<sup>24</sup> Even though the time when utilitarianism became “an organised philosophy” is not easy to identify—if it ever did—when it became inextricably bound to Radicalism in the mind of the public may be. If we take the heated debate on the principles and methods of utilitarians between Radicals and Whigs to have “reached its crescendo in six articles in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Westminster Review* in 1829–30,” as James Crimmins does,<sup>25</sup> then, neither do 1808–10 nor 1817–20—when both Bentham and Mill began to write and publish on parliamentary reform—seem to point to that moment in time. According to John Stuart Mill,

22 Macvey Napier Jr., ed., *Selection from the Correspondence of the Late Macvey Napier* (London: Macmillan, 1879), 26. Grote’s “Essay on ‘Magick’” appeared, edited with introduction by John Vaio, in *The Cambridge Ritualists Reconsidered: Proceedings of the First Oldfather Conference*, ed. William M. Calder (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1991), 265–90.

23 Mary Thale, ed., *The Autobiography of Francis Place* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 6. This is certainly how Mill thought of himself. See J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 22 Sept. 1811, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 6, 49 (see also, 14 Aug. 1816, in *ibid.* vol. 7, 59); cf. D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 26 Sept. 1811, in *ibid.* vol. 6, 51.

24 Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, trans. Mary Morris (London: Faber and Faber, 1929), xv.

25 James E. Crimmins, *Utilitarian Philosophy and Politics; Bentham’s Later Years* (London: Continuum, 2011), 25. However, as Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John Barrow have shown, “that rivalry was not the only, or even the most significant, dimension of the relationship between philosophic Whigs and Radicals”: *That Noble Science of Politics; A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 93. For a useful summary of the debate between Whigs and Radicals, and Bentham’s involvement, see Crimmins, *Utilitarian Philosophy and Politics*, chapter 1.

that moment came with the setting up of *Westminster Review* in 1824, which "made considerable noise in the world, and gave a recognized *status*, in the arena of opinion and discussion, to the Benthamic type of radicalism, out of all proportion to the number of its adherents [...]."<sup>26</sup>

According to the younger Mill, James Mill was instrumental in distinguishing the Benthamite "type of radicalism" from other types of radicalism; his critical article addressed to *Edinburgh Review*, which appeared in the first issue of *Westminster Review*, had set the tone of Philosophic Radicalism: "So formidable an attack on the Whig party and policy had never before been made; nor had so great a blow been ever struck, in this country, for radicalism."<sup>27</sup> George Grote's part in the "war" between Whigs and Benthamite Radicals was not underestimated by the younger Mill, since he thought Grote to be "one of the first of his rank and station to proclaim strong Benthamic-Radical opinions," publishing "a pamphlet of merit, in defence thereof against the *Edinburgh Review*";<sup>28</sup> it was the first strike against its "see-saw" politics.<sup>29</sup>

Grote's intellectual independence was frequently denied by his contemporaries, since the traditional view of the elder Mill's influence on Grote extended to the latter's works on parliamentary reform. Grote's *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform* (1821) attempted to respond to James Mackintosh's review (*Edinburgh Review*, 1818) of Bentham's *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* (1817). According to Bain, in that article Grote "had thoroughly imbibed the method and views of James Mill, which he developed by resources peculiar to himself"; Grote was incapable, it is argued, in effacing the "strong marks of Mill's famous article on Government" (which was published in 1820).<sup>30</sup> The ten-year gap between Grote's *Statement* and his *Essentials of Parliamentary Reform*, which appeared in 1831, seemed only to corroborate the argument of Grote "thoroughly [imbibing] the method and views of James Mill." Not only was it written at James Mill's insistence,<sup>31</sup> but also it appeared just a year after the elder Mill's "Ballot" (1830). Another interesting parallel which may also add

26 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *cw*, vol. 1, 101.

27 *Ibid.*, 95.

28 J.S. Mill to T. Carlyle, 2 Aug. 1833, *cw*, vol. 12, 170.

29 For the term, see James Mill, "Periodical Literature: *Edinburgh Review*," *Westminster Review* 1, no. 1 (1824): 206–49.

30 Bain, "The Intellectual Character and Writings of George Grote," in Bain, ed. *Minor Works of George Grote*, [9], [1]. Cf. [H], "Grote's Public Work," *The Examiner* 3439 (27 Dec. 1873): 1288.

31 H. Grote, *Life*, 66–7. Harriet Grote was optimistic that Grote's pamphlet would be "much approved" by James Mill. Interestingly, James Mill also convinced Bentham to write a new introduction to his short "Catechism." See J. Bentham to J.H. Koe, 1 Jan. 1817, in Conway,

to the credibility of the traditional view was that both works appeared subsequently to another Whig critique of “Benthamic-Radical opinions”—this time James Mill’s—famously penned by Macaulay the year before (*Edinburgh Review*, 1829).

It would be pertinent to draw a methodological note at this point. That Grote readily admitted Mill’s “intellectual ascendancy” over him is neither necessary nor sufficient to prove that Mill did indeed influence Grote. Bentham, Ricardo, Mill and Grote frequently met in person with almost no evidence of what went on in their meetings left behind; hence, in trying to determine the nature of the intellectual relationship between Mill and Grote, how does one distinguish between adoption or paraphrase and influence?<sup>32</sup> In the years following Mill’s “Government” and Grote’s *Statement*, “the little knot of young men” of the “Utilitarian Society,” who seized “with youthful fanaticism” on the various Benthamite-Radical opinions, were beginning to make considerable noise in intellectual circles.<sup>33</sup> In his *Autobiography*, John Stuart Mill noted that “though none of us, probably, agreed in every respect with my father, his opinions . . . were the principal element which gave its colour and character to the little group of young men who were the first propagators of what was afterwards called ‘philosophic radicalism.’”<sup>34</sup> Since any overlap between the ideas of Mill and Grote may be due to a conscious effort to maximise the impact of “philosophic radicalism,” especially with the setting up of *Westminster Review* and *Parliamentary History and Review*,<sup>35</sup> Bentham’s *Plan*, and its immediate reception, which created the need for the publication of Grote’s *Statement*, does seem to provide a framework within which the Mill-Grote relationship can be re-examined. James Mill’s “Government” “was regarded probably by all of . . . [the younger ‘philosophic radicals’] as a masterpiece of political wisdom”;<sup>36</sup> so the question here is what new element, if any, Grote brought to the debate concerning “theoretic reform.”

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*Bentham’s Correspondence* IX, 323; also, Philip Schofield, *Utility and Democracy; The Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 141, 141n23.

32 Quentin Skinner, “The Limits of Historical Explanations,” *Philosophy* 41, no. 157 (1966): 205–6, 209. See also, Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 26–7.

33 See J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, cw, vol. 1, chapter 4.

34 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, cw, vol. 1, 107.

35 *Parliamentary History and Review* was a short-lived radical periodical (1826–1828), in which contributors presented reports on parliamentary debates together with commentaries pointing out fallacies committed by speakers of the house. See J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, cw, vol. 1, 121–3.

36 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, cw, vol. 1, 107.

## 3

Jeremy Bentham wrote the "Parliamentary Reform Catechism"—a brief outline of a plan on parliamentary reform—originally in 1809. Rejected by the publisher, "despair of use" had kept it "upon the shelf." But in 1817, Bentham's *Plan* finally appeared in print. A long introductory note bridged the gap between writing and publishing it.<sup>37</sup> We may simply offer a résumé of Bentham's aims at publishing his lengthy book.

"Goaded to the task by the groans of all around [him] of late," Bentham pressed on the urgency of the matter: "[t]he country, if my eyes do not deceive me, is already at the very brink:—reform or convulsion, such is the alternative."<sup>38</sup> Britain was on track "to national ruin" because the "*partial*," "*separate*" and "*sinister*" interests—the monarchical and aristocratical (i.e., the interests of the few)—kept "under [their] conjunct yoke" the "*universal*," i.e., the democratic, interest. Bentham could not have been clearer on the aims of the ruling few: "curse on the swinish multitude," the purpose of the constitution was "to make the one man happy, the one object of legitimate idolatry,—with the small number of others to whom it accords with his high pleasure to impart any of the means of happiness."<sup>39</sup> To subvert the corruptive influence of "C——r General and Co.," i.e., the sinister partnership between monarchy and aristocracy, Bentham proposed one simple remedy: democratic ascendancy.<sup>40</sup> But how could the universal interest acquire superiority over sinister interests, when the corruptive influence of the few had reached at an all-time high?<sup>41</sup> Short of revolution, Bentham replied, radical—not moderate—reform was the only possible solution to this problem.<sup>42</sup> In his introductory remarks, Bentham focused primarily on reforming the "situation" of the electors and that of the representatives—whereas in the "Catechism," he also addressed the matter of election judicature.<sup>43</sup> The issue at stake was how to effectively maximise the dependence of the representatives to the electors and minimise the exposure of both the electors and the representatives to corruptive influences, i.e., being

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37 Jeremy Bentham, *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* (London: R. Hunter, 1817), i. For an excellent analysis of Bentham's ideas on parliamentary reform, see Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, chapters 5–6.

38 Bentham, *Plan*, ii.

39 Ibid. x–xi, xviii–xix.

40 Ibid. xxiii–xxvi.

41 Ibid. xx.

42 Ibid. lvi.

43 Ibid. lxxvi, 1–2.



dependent upon the will of “C[orrupte]r General and Co.”<sup>44</sup> On one hand, as far as electors were concerned, to assure the advancement of universal interest Bentham proposed “virtual universality,” “practical equality” and “freedom,” by means of “secrecy,” of suffrage.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, there was the matter of securing due dependence towards constituents as well as complete independence towards everyone else—which amounted to annual elections.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, there was also the matter of making sure that representatives were fit—and obliged—to do their job, once they were placed in the House of Commons, in terms of “appropriate probity,” “intellectual aptitude” and “active talent.”<sup>47</sup>

From the moment of the publication of his *Plan*, Crimmins notes, Bentham “became widely recognised as the pre-eminent theorist of political radicalism.”<sup>48</sup> The *Quarterly Review* author conceded such a status to Bentham, though not without a hint of irony: indeed he was “one to whom the moderate reformers have decreed the palm of superior acuteness and comprehension.” However, the reviewer consciously blurred the line between Whigs and Radicals, by drawing attention to a particular note in Bentham’s *Plan*: “[i]t is a singular fact that this Mr. Bentham, now decisively a radical, was himself only a moderate reformer till the year 1809.”<sup>49</sup> Still, whether moderate or radical reformer, Bentham’s happiest invention, in the reviewer’s closing words, was “adopting the language of Babel as the proper vehicle for the doctrines of political confusion.”<sup>50</sup>

Although no reviewer had let Bentham’s mode of exposition slide without an ironic comment or two,<sup>51</sup> the most important criticisms revolved around

44 See the note at *ibid.* xxii–xxiii. For the term, “corrupter-general,” see J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *CW*, vol. 1, 109. See further, P. Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, 142n27.

45 Bentham, *Plan*, lxxv.

46 Bentham, *Plan*, lxxix–lxxxii, cclvi–cclxvi, cclxxxv–ccxcix.

47 Bentham, *Plan*, 2–5. See also, *ibid.* lxxvi–lxxxvi, cxcix–ccxxiv.

48 Crimmins, *Utilitarian Philosophy and Politics*, 26. According to Halévy, *Growth*, 417, “Bentham’s work became the classical work of the Radical party.”

49 [Anon.], “Bentham’s *Plan of Parliamentary Reform*,” *Quarterly Review* 18, no. 35 (1817): 128, 130 (commenting on Bentham, *Plan*, cvi, note). For the debate on Bentham’s so-called transition to Radicalism see, Mary P. Mack, *Jeremy Bentham; An Odyssey of Ideas* (London: Heinemann, 1963); J.R. Dinwiddy, “Bentham’s Transition to Political Radicalism, 1809–10,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, no. 4 (1975): 683–700; James E. Crimmins, “Bentham’s Political Radicalism Reexamined,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55, no. 2 (1994): 259–81; Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, chapter 6, sect. I.

50 [Anon.], “Bentham’s *Plan of Parliamentary Reform*,” 135.

51 [Anon.], “Bentham’s *Plan of Parliamentary Reform*,” 128–30; [James Mackintosh], “Universal Suffrage,” *Edinburgh Review* 31, no. 61 (1818): 173–74; [Anon.], “Bentham’s



a different axis: according to the *Quarterly Review* author, Bentham ought to expect "that the Tories are not likely to be confounded with his flock, and to run away with any of the merit of his ["whiggological"] theories."<sup>52</sup> Bentham, according to another reviewer, declared himself, at least in theory, "to be the advocate of perfect unadulterated republicanism."<sup>53</sup> Being famous as the theorist of radicalism was no compliment.<sup>54</sup>

In *Edinburgh Review*, James Mackintosh saw "[w]ith regret," among the radicals, "ingenious and enlightened men, though none indeed, who have had political experience."<sup>55</sup> Though he later argued that Radicals "ascribe to every visionary project of change the certainty of a proposition in geometry,"<sup>56</sup> in his review of Bentham he waved "all advantage, which may be supposed to be possessed by those who defend established principles against untried projects": the test would be on what "experience" had supplied.<sup>57</sup> Experience taught that "most men imbibe prejudice with their knowledge" and the best way to reach a "right decision" in legislation was not by virtual universality of suffrage but by appealing to "the largest body of well-educated men, of leisure, large property, temperate character, and who are impartial on more subjects than any other class of men." An ascendancy of "landed proprietors" was deemed "on the whole, as a beneficial circumstance in a representative body." To maintain societal order and resist governmental encroachments a parliamentary assembly must combine talent and skill "with popularity, with fame, with property, with liberal education and condition."<sup>58</sup>

Mackintosh agreed with Bentham: "*the state of interests*" is the principle, or source, "referred to and employed" for "a solution of this problem."<sup>59</sup> And though Mackintosh believed that in practice the state of interests would be

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Parliamentary Reform," *The Critical Review or Annals of Literature* 5, no. 6 (1817): 551, 556–57, 560; [Anon.], "Parliamentary Reform," *British Review and London Critical Journal* 11, no. 22 (1818): 319, 323.

52 [Anon.], "Bentham's *Plan of Parliamentary Reform*," 135.

53 [Anon.], "Bentham's Parliamentary Reform," 555.

54 In his reply to Francis Burdett's motion for parliamentary reform on 2 June 1818, Henry Brougham remarked: "[Bentham's] plan of parliamentary reform had shown that he had dealt more with books than with men." See T.C. Hansard, ed. *The Parliamentary Debates. Volume XXXVIII; 13 April–10 June 1818* (London: Hansard), 1164.

55 [Mackintosh], "Universal Suffrage," 173.

56 [James Mackintosh], "Parliamentary Reform," *Edinburgh Review* 34, no. 68 (1820): 466.

57 [Mackintosh], "Universal Suffrage," 174.

58 [Mackintosh], "Universal Suffrage," 176–77. Cf. [Mackintosh], "Parliamentary Reform," 483.

59 Bentham, *Plan*, cclxx.

best served by vesting influence on the “middling classes”—not only because of their “sense and virtue” but also because of their “numerous connexions of interest with the other parts of society”—to combine the influence of “wealth and numbers” both the minority and the majority required representation.<sup>60</sup> Identity of interests between government and governed would be achieved by “[dividing] the people into classes, and [examining] the variety of local and professional interests of which the general interest is composed.”<sup>61</sup> This meant that any other scheme of parliamentary composition, through either low or high uniform qualification, “would fluctuate between country gentlemen and demagogues” and “between landholders and courtiers,” and thus either “expose the quiet of society to continual hazard” or “impair the spirit of liberty.”<sup>62</sup> According to Mackintosh, a radical reform would have led to the opposite effects from those intended.<sup>63</sup> The guiding principle was to protect *particular interests* through representation; Mackintosh would clarify later that, unlike Bentham and James Mill, “[w]hen we speak of *principles* on this subject, we are not to be understood as ascribing to them the character of rules of law, or axioms of science”—their support lies in “general conviction, growing with experience, of their fitness and value” rather than based on *a priori* principles of action.<sup>64</sup>

Whigs and Radicals agreed in what needed to be reformed, i.e., distribution of seats in parliament and the right of voting, but disagreed on the extent and scale of these reforms to be effectual. But most importantly, they disagreed on the urgency of the problem, and, thus, on how long it should take for the solution to be applied. As we saw, Bentham’s *Plan* was emphatic that the country was at the “very brink:—reform or convulsion,” but Mackintosh’s review intended to show that this was a false dilemma: radical reform would have led to the same breach of liberty as would revolution. Mackintosh asked all reformers to unite under the cause of liberty, renouncing “those extravagant opinions which supply the champions of abuse with the most effective weapons.”<sup>65</sup>

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60 [Mackintosh], “Universal Suffrage,” 191–92.

61 [Mackintosh], “Universal Suffrage,” 175. See also, *ibid.* 184–85.

62 [Mackintosh], “Universal Suffrage,” 181–82. Seeking “quiet improvement,” Mackintosh tried to show how guidance to securing safe reform had already been supplied by the history of Britain (“Parliamentary Reform,” 466, 479–80; see also, *ibid.* 492–93).

63 [Mackintosh], “Universal Suffrage,” 197–98, 175–76.

64 [Mackintosh], “Parliamentary Reform,” 475–76.

65 [Mackintosh], “Universal Suffrage,” 199. It seems that Mackintosh’s words proved prophetic, since the Six Acts severely limiting the liberty of the press passed soon after the “Paterloo Massacre.”

According to William Thomas, Mackintosh delivered "a more severe blow" to Benthamite aspirations than anything taking place, election-wise, at Westminster in 1818 and 1819.<sup>66</sup> What seemed certain at the time was that the Radicals needed to respond to Mackintosh. For this reason, most commentators are convinced that Mill's famous article on "Government," as Halévy has put it, "should be taken as the answer of the Benthamites to the objections of Mackintosh." Although Grote wrote "the 'official' reply to Mackintosh," Mill had provided a "covert attack on Mackintosh's scheme of virtual representation."<sup>67</sup> However, analysing what each tried to achieve in their respective works will provide a safer footing to reassess whether Grote did indeed "thoroughly [imbibe] the method and views of James Mill" on reform. For example, Grote took on Mackintosh, only after the latter challenged the radicals for a reply in his "official manifesto of the Whigs."<sup>68</sup>

## 4

James Mill's "Government" was first published in September 1820 in the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica*<sup>69</sup> and in April 1821 in the evening newspaper *British Traveller*—demand led Mill to publish a stand-alone edition in May 1821. As the advertisement on this stand-alone edition of "Government" noted, "many people [...] were impressed with the value of this concise and clear exposition of the Elements of Political Knowledge."<sup>70</sup> By 1825, "Government," reprinted with some of Mill's other contributions to the *Supplement*, had become "the text-books of the young men of the Union at Cambridge"; this hides the fact that in 1820, Mill was less pleased with it than with some of his

66 William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals; Nine-Studies in Theory and Practice 1817–1841* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 125. For details on the by-elections of Westminster in 1819, see *ibid.* chapter 2.

67 Halévy, *Growth*, 419. Collini, Winch, Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics*, 98. This view was also expressed by Ernest Baker. See "Introduction," in James Mill, *An Essay on Government*, ed. E. Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), xiv.

68 According to James Mill, this was how Henry Brougham himself called Mackintosh's second article (J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 20 Dec. 1820, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 8, 327–28).

69 Interestingly, Mill received more than the usual payment rate for this article; see J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 16 Sept. 1820, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 8, 240.

70 James Mill, *The Article Government Reprinted from the Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Traveller Office, 5 May 1821), 1.

other contributions to the *Supplement*.<sup>71</sup> Still, his closest friend, David Ricardo, thought "Government" "well calculated to serve the good cause," i.e., of good government, while being "written in the true philosophic temper"—Mill had succeeded in avoiding "the appearance of an essay on Reform of Parliament," by "not entering into the consideration of the securities for a good election."<sup>72</sup> However, both could be the case; a philosophical treatment of the subject did not necessarily exclude an argument for parliamentary reform.<sup>73</sup>

Communication between Mill and Macvey Napier, editor of the *Supplement*, about "Government" commenced early.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, Mill seemed to be still working on it in September 1819, when he tried to reassure Napier that his essay would contain "nothing capable of alarming even a Whig."<sup>75</sup> There was ample time to read and respond to Mackintosh's review of Bentham, being published almost a year earlier.<sup>76</sup> Most importantly, Mackintosh did not seem to consider Mill's "Government" as a reply to his review of Bentham. As it was noted in passing earlier, in November 1820 Mackintosh challenged the Radicals to offer a refutation of the argument developed in his review of Bentham—Mackintosh may have been returning "fire" to the Radicals, since a letter in the *Black Dwarf* in January 1818 had challenged the *Edinburgh Review* to publish a response to Bentham's *Plan*.<sup>77</sup> In 1822 Mackintosh noted that what qualified one to be considered a member of "the violent of all parties," the "Radical Whigs," was "indulg[ing] the wild and absurd reveries of Annual Parliaments and Universal

71 J. Mill to J.R. McCulloch, 18 Aug. 1825, in Bain, *James Mill*, 292; J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 13 Nov. 1820, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 8, 291.

72 D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 27 July 1820, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 8, 211. See also, D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 30 Aug. 1823, in *ibid.* vol. 9, 375.

73 See, Terence Ball, "Introduction," in *James Mill's Political Writings*, ed. T. Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xxv. See also, Joseph Hamburger, "James Mill on Universal Suffrage and the Middle Class," *The Journal of Politics* 24, no. 1 (1962): 169; Jack Lively and John Rees, "Introduction," in *Utilitarian Logic and Politics*, 5–7.

74 See for example, J. Mill to M. Napier, 2 July 1816, in Napier, *Correspondence*, 16. See further, Bain, *James Mill*, 128–9.

75 J. Mill to M. Napier, 10 Sept. 1819 and 11 May 1820, in Napier, *Correspondence*, 23–24.

76 Bentham only made a passing remark to his brother about Mackintosh's review. See J. Bentham to S. Bentham, 26 Jan. 1819, in Conway, *Bentham's Correspondence*, vol. 9, 323.

77 [Mackintosh], "Parliamentary Reform," 499. See, Cato, "The Edinburgh Reviewers and Parliamentary Reform," *Black Dwarf* 2, no. 4 (28 Jan. 1818): 62–64. The correspondent's challenge to *Edinburgh Review* was first taken up by Henry Brougham, though not to the extent Mackintosh would do five months later: Henry Brougham, "State of Parties," *Edinburgh Review* 30, no. 59 (1818): 199 ff. Mill brought Cato's letter to Bentham's attention; see J. Bentham to J.H. Koe, 1 Feb. 1818, in Conway, *Bentham's Correspondence*, vol. 9, 155.

Suffrage."<sup>78</sup> James Mill's "Government" did not indulge in these "reveries"; what was more, it avoided discussing secret voting—what Bentham had identified as the distinctive feature of his argument for reform.<sup>79</sup> Mill concluded by highlighting the importance of the virtuous "middling ranks"; in his "Whig Manifesto," Mackintosh himself noted that "[t]he great strength of the cause of Moderate Reform, lies in the middle classes."<sup>80</sup> Thus, Mackintosh seemed to be honest when he told Napier that the essays on "Education" and "Government" were "very ably written." From Mackintosh's point of view, what was problematic about those essays, at least in 1821 (i.e., before becoming "the text-books of the young men of the Union at Cambridge"), did not seem to be the *matter* of the arguments delivered but the *form* in which they were delivered. According to Mackintosh, Mill had employed an erroneous philosophical method, one that would be "condemned by Bacon."<sup>81</sup>

What is offered as a proof that Mill had Mackintosh in mind while writing the article was his rejection of "variegated representation" as inadequate means for identifying the interests of the community with those of the representatives: "According to the scheme in question, the best elective body is that which consists of certain classes, professions, or fraternities. The notion is, that when these fraternities or bodies are represented, the community itself is represented."<sup>82</sup> Hence, it is usually argued that Mill's attribution of the particular scheme to a speech against reform in 1793 by Robert Jenkinson (in 1820, Lord Liverpool) was just a smokescreen—his intended enemy was Mackintosh's review of Bentham. As Joseph Hamburger has noted, this was an old scheme of representation, aiming at providing "a variety of experience and an obstacle to the predominance of one interest while providing representation

78 [James Mackintosh], *Letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt, on his apostasy from the cause of Parliamentary Reform*, 3rd ed. (London, 1822 [or. ed. 1792]), 28.

79 See Bentham, *Plan*, lxxvii. While writing his *Plan* Bentham became increasingly aware that others before him had introduced the ballot in their arguments for parliamentary reform (see note at *ibid.* lxxviii).

80 [Mackintosh], "Parliamentary Reform," 466.

81 J. Mackintosh to M. Napier, 8 Jan. 1822, in Napier, *Correspondence*, 34. See further [James Mackintosh], "Stewart's *Introduction to the Encyclopaedia*," *Edinburgh Review* 36, no. 71 (1821): 241–42.

82 James Mill, *The Article Government Reprinted from the Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Traveller Office, 5 May 1821), 23 (James Mill, "Government," in *Political Writings*, ed. T. Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 30—hereafter references to the 1992 edition will be given in parenthesis). For the term "variegated representation," see, Mill, *CPB*, vol. 1, 162r and 170r.

for all”—Mill himself did not try to “trace [it] farther back than the year 1793.” It was a scheme to which many Whigs and Tories subscribed.<sup>83</sup>

An overlooked review of Bentham, published in the—“tory in politics”—<sup>84</sup> *British Review* in May 1818 seems to put into doubt that Mill was writing specifically against Mackintosh’s take on “variegated representation.” According to the critic:

The people can neither be numerically represented, nor can the elected represent individually. The real representation is in the whole house; and whether this collective representation is sufficient or not depends upon the question whether it is a sufficiently broad specimen of the prevalent feeling, character and mind, of the country; or, in other terms [...], are “all the estates (*i.e.* orders, classes, and degrees) of the people of the realm” represented? The representation can only be virtual; and to be so constituted as not only to bring the mind and intelligence of the whole country into operation, but to bring all its various interests, habits, talents, ranks, stations, and functions under contribution to its moral and intellectual fund, and at the same time to place them under the range of its supervision, it must remain accessible by all the various avenues through which all these various denominations of persons may find their way to it.

Thus, a “numerical representation is absolute nonsense; all that can be done is to take off an impression of that which alone has unity, body, und consistency, the leading opinions of men of thought.”<sup>85</sup> Like Mackintosh, the anonymous reviewer thought that radical views on the question of reform were self-defeating. However, the author seemed to revert to the old Burkean

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83 Hamburger, “Mill on Suffrage,” 174; Mill, “Government,” 23 (30). Bentham’s *Plan* made several references to the parliamentary debates of 1793 in notes (e.g., xxvii–xxx, l–li, lxxxviii, cl, cclxxi). The petition, to which Jenkinson replied, was included in the appendix of Bentham’s *Plan*.

84 Between 1811 and 1822, the editor of the *British Review* was William Roberts. As Gerald le Grys Norgate argues, the *British Review* was “tory in politics, and advocating evangelical views on religious topics.” See “Roberts, William (1767–1849),” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 48, ed. Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1896), 395. Roberts wrote half of the reviews that appeared in each number: Arthur Roberts, *The Life, Letters and Opinions of William Roberts* (London: Seeleys, 1850), 40.

85 [Anon.], “Parliamentary Reform,” *British Review and London Critical Journal* 11, no. 22 (1818): 309–310 (see also *ibid.* 304). Bentham’s *Plan* was one of the two works reviewed; the other was T.B.H. Oldfield’s *The Representative History of Great Britain and Ireland*, 6 vols. (London: Baldwin and Co., 1816).

argument, by noting that he was for reform, but "reform that engrafts upon experience, and that principle of improvement which unites with the principle of conservation."<sup>86</sup>

Bentham, Mackintosh and the *British Review* critic claimed that their argument pertaining to reform was an argument from utility. For Mackintosh the happiness of the community was promoted through liberty, which necessitated taking the particular circumstances of "the people of Great Britain" under advisement in any discussion on representation. The object of government was security against wrong, either "against wrong from each other [i.e., the subjects] or from the government itself."<sup>87</sup> Likewise, the reviewer argued that "[t]he end of good government is to make the people happy, and wealthy, and powerful, and susceptible of expansion and improvement. The system is good from which good is derived, and under which happiness breeds and propagates, till life teems with beneficence and virtue."<sup>88</sup> Bentham agreed.<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, according to the *British Review* author, Bentham tried to "reform our constitution by foreign rules, rules derived *à priori*, rules of general theory, and where the means have an argumentative and philosophical fitness to their ends" and thus proceeded "in an order reverse of that by which [...] learning and science have been promoted." "[N]o theory," the critic argued, "is worth a thought which does not flow from the facts themselves,—which is not extracted from the bowels of experience." According to the reviewer, the subject should not be "treated as a question of principle rather than expedience, and as a problem involving a mere abstract truth, rather than as one in which the solution is found in the passions, the wants, and the weaknesses of ordinary humanity."<sup>90</sup> Bentham's proposals were "insane" and "nauseating stuff," "dismal cant" and "delirious nonsense."<sup>91</sup> Bentham's critics thus agreed that a fatal flaw in his argument was ignoring experience—drawing his conclusions exclusively from *a priori* principles. This criticism was not of course new;

86 [Anon.], "Parliamentary Reform," 286–87. The author criticised the Whigs (referring to Francis Jeffrey, "Leckie on the British Government," *Edinburgh Review* 20, no. 40 (1812): 315–46) for their insistence on the excessive influence of the Crown on the two Houses ([Anon.], "Parliamentary Reform," 306–307).

87 [Mackintosh], "Universal Suffrage," 174; [Mackintosh], "Parliamentary Reform," 488–89.

88 [Anon.], "Parliamentary Reform," 314.

89 Bentham, *Plan*, lxxx–lxxxii; see also the ensuing discussion on the benefits of universal suffrage (ibid. lxxxiii–lxxxix).

90 [Anon.], "Parliamentary Reform," 314–15.

91 [Anon.], "Parliamentary Reform," 317, 323. For James Mill's rules for the purpose of discrediting an argument without actually engaging with it, see Mill, *CPB*, vol. 1, 27v.



it constituted a long standing debate between “speculation” and “practice”—Bentham’s *Plan* had actually commented upon it.<sup>92</sup>

In his 1793 speech, Lord Liverpool argued that should the question of reform be “placed upon its proper ground,” it would be evident that “it was a question of wisdom, a question of expediency.” As such, Lord Liverpool added, “we ought to examine this question on the same principle on which all questions of the sort must be examined, viz. by inquiring what was the end that was to be produced; and then considering what were the means likely to produce that end.”<sup>93</sup> Mill’s “Government” began by putting the question of government on this ground, i.e., being treated as a question of expediency: “[t]he question with respect to Government is a question about the adaptation of means to an end.”<sup>94</sup> But this was not all; Lord Liverpool had concluded his speech against reform arguing that

human institutions must be adapted not only to the virtues, but to the weakness and passions of mankind. [...] That there were theoretic defects in the composition of the House of Commons, was not what he pretended to deny; it was incumbent, however, on those who proposed a reform, to prove that those defects affected the practice of the constitution.<sup>95</sup>

One of the “most popular objections to Reform,” as Ricardo told Mill on September 9th 1819, was “that bad as our parliament was in theory it worked well, and therefore it would be unwise to meddle with it.”<sup>96</sup> It does not seem that Mill’s “Government” meet the opponents of reform on exclusively Whig grounds. It was more likely that Mill was aiming at the Tories rather than the Whigs, since on September 10th Mill expressed his confidence to Napier that

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92 Edmund Burke had called it the “old quarrel.” See “Thoughts on the Present Discontents” (1770), in *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, ed. Francis Caravan, 4 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), vol. 1, 76. Bentham’s *Plan* noticed the debate in a note (Bentham, *Plan*, cviii). In his biography of Francis Place, Wallas cited a letter from Place to Joseph Hume (1 Mar. 1839), in which Place had claimed that he tried to make “the reading” of Bentham’s *Plan* “more easy to the commonalty” and that he also added notes to it, with Thomas Wooler, the editor of *Black Dwarf* (Wallas, *Francis Place*, 84).

93 Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 30, 810.

94 Mill, “Government,” 3 (3).

95 Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 30, 820.

96 D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 9 September 1819, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 8, 63. As Ricardo told Mill, this was an argument to which Mackintosh himself responded in his early pamphlet ([Mackintosh], *Letter to Pitt*, 9–10).

he could make a Tory "a convert to the principles of good government" sooner than any Whig (including Mackintosh), who is "more terrified at the principles of good government than the worst of Tories."<sup>97</sup> Mill was confident that his ink would not be lost on Tories because they considered government to be "a bad machine, which works well." The Whigs' view was different: they argued that the British political system "is a good machine which works ill." One is more likely to be persuaded in fixing a machine, when s/he already considers it broken—even if the machine produced good results—, rather than be convinced to fixing something, s/he did not believe to be broken, while being persuaded that, assuming its control, s/he would bring about good results.<sup>98</sup>

Mill tried to provide "a correct, a consistent and clear development of [his] own views" on what the ends and means of government consisted in. Trying to meet the demands of the anti-reformers who highlighted the "theoretic" faults of the constitution, he aimed at laying the groundwork for a theory which could convince his readers that the "machine" was bad, or, if that was not possible, at least convince them that its "good effects" were insufficient to prove that government was good too. Lord Liverpool had argued this much in his own speech: whether the mode of government was appropriate or not "was not on the effects of our system only that it was necessary to rest," but bitter experience had showed to "those who had passed their lives in the studies of speculative retirement," becoming "acquainted with human nature," that "the faults of each [i.e., monarchy, aristocracy and democracy] might correct the faults of the other, and [...] the virtues of each might prove an aid to the virtues of the other."<sup>99</sup> James Mill and Lord Liverpool seemed to begin from the same premise: "the surface of history [...] affords no certain principle of decision" that would make it possible to assess the best form of government—similar forms of government have extraordinarily different results in different countries. Lord Liverpool reached a different conclusion than Mill: "the effects of government on the people do not so much depend on general principles and general theories, as on little accidental circumstances which are

97 J. Mill to M. Napier, 10 Sept. 1819, in Napier, *Correspondence*, 24. A day later, Mill told Ricardo that he could convert Canning to the principles of good government sooner than any one who is a "confirmed party man"—a "confirmed Whig" was "decidedly the most vicious creature we have amongst us" (J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 11 Sept. 1819, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 8, 68). However, Mill's hopes were getting frustrated with regard to Canning (see, Mill, *CPB*, vol. 5, 192r).

98 Mill, *CPB*, vol. 1, 178v; see also, J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 28 Dec. 1820, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 8, 328.

99 Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 30, 820.

frequently not even perceptible"; whereas Mill believed that as long as experience seems divided on this issue, "we must go beyond the surface, and penetrate to the springs within."<sup>100</sup>

Suffice it to say that Mill began from where Bentham left off: the "sole clue" with regard to political conduct of individuals and, especially of, groups is the state of interests.<sup>101</sup> It was not that Mill did not consider individuals to be capable of "appropriate probity," in Bentham's terms, i.e., being capable of pursuing the universal rather than the private interest. Not only did it suit Mill to assume that much of human nature, but also he would seem to follow the Tory advice that human institutions must be adapted "to the weakness and passions of mankind"; his argument was built on the assumption that those who hold the power will abuse it, if left unchecked. However, it was not just a strategic move; it was a deeply held belief:

In all the private affairs of private life, no virtue should be more assiduously cultivated [i.e., "indulgence to the faults of one another"]. But in all abuses of power, we should accustom ourselves to reflect, that sensibility to the undue pleasures of one or a few, is total insensibility to the miseries of thousands or millions. Indulgence to the abuses of power, is inhumanity upon the largest possible scale.<sup>102</sup>

As Mill noted in his *Commonplace Books*, responding to Burke, "Is not the tendency of the people, proved by all history, to defer too much? to trust too far?"<sup>103</sup> That Mill was trying to play on conservative territory is perhaps evident in that he also argued that a community could never act wrongly "from design," since no human being can "wish [her/his] own misery";<sup>104</sup> praise of the "prescriptive constitution" (i.e., that misdirected pursuits of communal interests have been transformed to good ones through gradual and imperceptible alterations) essentially amounts to arguing "that any change in the government, so as to make it true to its ends, instead of being false to them, is the same thing as a proposal to dissolve all the bonds of government."<sup>105</sup> The only "defect" of democracy that "experience" and "reason" suggests is that "a community in

<sup>100</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 30, 810; Mill, "Government," 8–9 (11).

<sup>101</sup> Bentham, *Plan*, cccci–ccciii.

<sup>102</sup> J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 10 Oct. 1815, in Sraffa, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, 306–308.

<sup>103</sup> Mill, "Government," 6–7 (8).

<sup>104</sup> This suggests that one must ignore her/his inclinations and go after her/his (real) interests. See Mill, *CPB*, vol. 1, 33r.

<sup>105</sup> Mill, "Government," 6–7 (8); Mill, *CPB*, vol. 1, 34v. See also, Burke, "Reform of the Representation of the Commons," in Caravan, *Burke*, vol. 4, 20.

mass is ill adapted for the business of Government," since the heavy duties of governing would eventually defeat its purpose—representative government provides however the remedy.<sup>106</sup>

Contrary to Lord Liverpool's argument, Mill argued that democracy's defects were of a different kind than those of other modes of governance. He added that the traditional view, that "the ends of Government can be attained in perfection only, as under the British Constitution, by an union of all the three," begged the question; no evidence was provided for the existence of sufficient checks preventing those who have sinister interests from forming alliances to subdue the universal interest.<sup>107</sup> Mill argued that the key to good government is not speculating that the union of the three simple forms will balance themselves out; but taking steps to ensure that those who govern—since it is practically impossible for the whole community to take part in governing—pursue the interests of all, i.e., protect everyone's fair share of the produce of their labour.

According to Mill, "[i]n the grand discovery of modern times, the system of representation, the solution of all the difficulties, both speculative and practical, will perhaps be found." Given the wants, weaknesses and the passions of mankind, not only do Representatives need to have "a degree of power sufficient for the business of checking," but also develop "an identity of interest with the community." However, one cannot assume that interests will coincide naturally—it is of course possible that they might, otherwise co-operation would be impossible—; steps must be taken to make sure that Representatives will not join in the plundering. Mill considers two such steps: duration of tenure and choice of representatives. However, Mill did not dwell much on details.<sup>108</sup> Although one cannot expect natural identity of interests in choosing representatives, Mill argued that, if limits should be set on who will constitute the choosing body, then, one may "struck off without inconvenience" those social relationships where identity of interests could be presumed to exist most naturally: children/parents, sisters/brothers, wives/husbands.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the utmost possible limit in the numbers of the choosing body, which

106 Mill, "Government," 6–7 (8).

107 Mill, "Government," 13–16 (17–20).

108 Mill, "Government," 17–20 (21–27). See also Edmund Burke, "Speech on a Bill for Shortening the Duration of Parliaments" (8 May 1780) in *Works of Edmund Burke*, 9 vols. (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1839), vol. 5, 388–401, quoted at Mill, *CPB*, vol. 1, 32v.

109 See Alan Ryan, "Two Concepts of Politics and Democracy: James and John Stuart Mill," in *Machiavelli and the Nature of Political Thought*, ed. M. Fleisher (New York: Athenaeum), 76–113, for perhaps the best attempt to defending James Mill's views on this aspect of "Government."

would best come close to consolidating identity of interests in the Representative body, according to Mill, would be universal male suffrage, to which forty years of age and a low, or not at all, property qualification were suitable limitations.

As regards the “variegated representation” scheme, its proponents, according to Mill, claimed that the choosing body should consist in several fraternities (that is, several groups of individuals with more or less identical interests). Their interests would be directly represented; whereas the remaining interests of the community would be indirectly represented, given the connections these fraternities have with the rest of the community. However, Mill, who had already seized on the demand of finding the solution to the scheme of representation “in the passions, the wants, and the weaknesses of ordinary humanity,” argued that one cannot expect these fraternities to pursue the interest of the excluded community—one cannot form institutions based on the expectation of such a spontaneous identity of interests when, at best, this happens naturally only in two or three types of social relationships (a presumption which already conceded too much). “The patrons of this system of Representation assume,” Mill argued, “that these fraternities will be sure to take that course which is *contrary* to their interest.” However, Mill thought that this is something they cannot prove given their definition of the principle of human nature as the foundation of a sound theory of government and their assumption that individual groups form no exception to this principle. “The real effect of this motley Representation, therefore, would only be to create a motley Aristocracy.”<sup>110</sup>

In 1825, Mill noted that Mackintosh was anticipated by Lord Liverpool.<sup>111</sup> Both James Mackintosh and Lord Liverpool had argued that there was one (they disagreed on which one) “class of men” which was impartial; i.e., that it had no *esprit du corps*—an acknowledgement of impartiality which was necessary in order to maintain that “all the estates (*i.e.* orders, classes, and degrees) of the people of the realm” were represented either directly or indirectly. In 1820, Mill laid emphasis on the so-called “impartiality,” since such impartiality was impossible (given Bentham’s fundamental theorem regarding the springs of action), no “class of men” could not serve as a substitute for the unrepresented. In 1825, now clearly responding to Mackintosh, Mill argued that “variegated representation” essentially meant that each class would pursue their selfish interests against the common interest, with only one means of

<sup>110</sup> Mill, “Government,” 20–26 (27–34).

<sup>111</sup> James Mill, “Edinburgh Review on Parliamentary Reform,” *Westminster Review* 4, no. 7 (1825): 214.

check of power: revolution.<sup>112</sup> Mill tried to balance an encyclopaedia entry with the cause of reform; any logical leaps that may be noticed in his argument,<sup>113</sup> seem to be accounted in the premises of his (Tory) opponents.

## 5

As we saw, in November 1820, Mackintosh challenged the Radicals to attempt to refute his 1818 argument on parliamentary representation.<sup>114</sup> Grote's *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform*, composed in the worst of circumstances,<sup>115</sup> was meant to offer such a refutation. As we also saw, according to Bain, Grote had failed to efface the "strong marks of Mill's famous article on Government."<sup>116</sup> Likewise, as William Thomas put it, "George Grote was Mill's most faithful pupil. In 1821 he wrote a pamphlet, *A Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform*, which is heavily indebted in terms of its argumentation and even its phraseology to both the *Essay on Government* and the *History of British India*."<sup>117</sup> John Stuart Mill's view that Grote was "more of a disciple" of James Mill "than anyone else" seems to have led to a caricature of Grote.

According to Grote, applying the "remedy of Lord Bacon" to political philosophy, i.e., "[sifting] and [verifying] fundamental principles" to reconstruct science on a better system, necessitates inquiring first "what experience teaches us concerning the laws of human action": "the amplest observation attests

<sup>112</sup> Mill, "Edinburgh Review on Reform," 214–6.

<sup>113</sup> See Crimmins, *Utilitarian Philosophy and Politics*, 29–31.

<sup>114</sup> [Mackintosh], "Parliamentary Reform," 499.

<sup>115</sup> H. Grote, *Life*, 40. His infant son had died and his wife almost died in the week following the premature delivery.

<sup>116</sup> Bain, "Grote's Character," [9], [1].

<sup>117</sup> Thomas, "The 'Essay on Government' and the Movement for Reform," 264; see also, Wendell Robert Carr, "James Mill's Politics Reconsidered: Parliamentary Reform and the Triumph of Truth," *Historical Journal* 14, no. 3 (1971): 564. Thomas seems to take Grote's reference to Mill's *British India* as evidence of Mill's *British India*'s influence ([George Grote], *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform; with a Reply to the Objections of the Edinburgh Review*, No. LXI (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1821): 102n–103n on James Mill, *History of British India*. 3rd ed., 6 vols. (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1826), vol. 3, 451–2), however, this reference is not sufficient to prove such influence as the elder Mill commented both on the conditions of secret and open voting; John Stuart Mill made the same reference, yet he drew the opposite conclusion to Grote. See John Stuart Mill, "Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform," *cw*, vol. 19, 331n–2n.

that the conduct of every individual will be determined by his interest.”<sup>118</sup> Bain’s comment as regards Grote having drawn “sustenance from Mill’s ‘On Government,’” in adopting Mill’s method and views focuses on Grote’s reference to the “laws of human action” concerning individual interests (something which was noticed in Grote’s summary of James Mill’s “Government”).<sup>119</sup> However, this ignores Grote’s reference to Bacon. In his manuscript notes, drawing on Bacon, Grote argued that “in Sciences which have real truth for their object; in which consequently the general principles cannot be laid down *à priori*, but must be evolved step by step, & by gradually widening our induction.”<sup>120</sup> Bacon’s point revolved around the need to combine both experience and reason, Grote noted, “drawing back a perverted doctrine to the laws of human nature and experience, and restoring its connection and intimacy with this great paternal roof.”<sup>121</sup> Even though James Mill was familiar with Bacon’s distinction between the “empirical” and the “inductive” philosopher,<sup>122</sup> no reference was made to Bacon in that work (or in Grote’s abstract of it). In *Statement*, however, Grote showed how Bentham’s law regarding human action was essential to the correct use of Mackintosh’s own Baconian method.

Grote began by repeating the general premises of the reformers; closely following Bentham, he laid emphasis on the need for equality. And when he came close to say something like the Mill’s “defects of democracy,” he highlighted the need for “emancipation from controul” on part of the electors,<sup>123</sup> the importance of which Bentham had already established. Moreover, in his discussion of the limited impact of public opinion on Parliamentary conduct, he did not repeat any of his notes on Mill’s article (i.e., the need for public opinion to be associated with active resistance to have an impact).<sup>124</sup> The definition of the scope and aim of government, “the extension of the public happiness,” was common between Bentham, Mill and their critics.<sup>125</sup> Grote’s piece, focusing on equality of political influence, followed Bentham’s *Plan* rather than Mill’s

118 [Grote], *Statement*, 7. Situating the pamphlet within the debate on “theoretic reform,” Grote’s method was praised by reviewers. See [Anon.] “Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform,” *The Examiner* 693 (14 Apr. 1821): 237–38; [Anon.] “Political Examiner,” *The Examiner* 1138 (22 Nov. 1829).

119 Crimmins, *Utilitarian Philosophy and Politics*, 29.

120 Senate House Library MS429/3 f. 8 (on Bacon, *Novum Organum*, aphorism 29).

121 Senate House Library MS429/3 f. 74 (on Bacon, *Novum Organum*, aphorism 95); [Grote], *Statement*, 7.

122 J. Mill, *CPB*, vol. 1, 106v. Bacon is one of the most frequently mentioned authors in James Mill’s *Commonplace Books*.

123 [Grote], *Statement*, 9, 11.

124 Senate House Library MS429/3 ff. 233, 235.

125 [Grote], *Statement*, 67.



piece, since the latter made an argument from property and labour for the promotion of social happiness.<sup>126</sup> However, further differences exist.

The first important difference between Mill's "Government" and Grote's *Statement* refers to their intended targets. Grote began by distinguishing between the Tory and the Whig view of the issue of parliamentary reform: the first "admit[s] that the Constitution is incongruous and untenable in theory, and only assert that, by the operation of some latent corrective which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, it nevertheless works well, and is in practice attended with admirable results"; the second infers that "the system has now for a very long period continued to produce results unequivocally mischievous—its machinery is nevertheless excellent, and unsusceptible of any important amelioration."<sup>127</sup> As we saw, the distinction was applied by James Mill as well. But it was actually Mill who seemed to adopt Grote's view to the effect that the Whig argument was different in kind from the Tory argument, not the other way round, since the distinction appears in Mill's *Commonplace Books* in notes dated after the publication of "Government."<sup>128</sup> In the Mill-Ricardo exchange in September 1819, what Grote defined as the Tory view, there appeared to be a general anti-reform argument—Ricardo had supposedly used Mackintosh's argument (from Mackintosh's 1792 pamphlet) to make a "convert of [an] old Whig Lady."<sup>129</sup> Mill's "Government" had taken on that general anti-reform view, which was later identified as "the Tory view," whereas Grote's *Statement* took on the Whig view. Thus, the commonplace view that Mill's was a "covert," and Grote's was an "overt," attack of the Whig view, seems to be true only to the extent that Tories and Whigs were using the same arguments against reform.

Grote identified two different lines of argumentation counteracting those of the Reformers; first, that there are other means to achieve the same effects (disinterested ministry, public opinion, class representation); second, that radical measures (universal suffrage, ballot) lead to the destruction of the constitution. Like Bentham and Mill, Grote saw the question of reform to basically be related with minimizing the benefit a "ruling company" would derive from misgovernment. Grote's expedients for avoiding misgovernment, in case the ruling company attempted to combine for sinister purposes, focused on that

126 Drawing on Adam Smith, Grote actually came close to arguing something similar to Mill as regards labour and happiness. See Senate House Library MS429/3 f. 82.

127 [Grote], *Statement*, 2.

128 Mill's references in his *Commonplace Books* to the distinction between the Tory and Whig view of the question of parliamentary reform appear in a section in which he also discussed Grote's *Statement* (see J. Mill, *CPB*, vol. 1, 178v–179r).

129 D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 9 Sept. 1819, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 8, 63; J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 11 Sept. 1819, in *ibid.*, vol. 8, 68.

government and its benefits should be shared equally to a large number of people and on that equality of independency (i.e., by means of the ballot) as well as frequency of elections.<sup>130</sup> Although the number of participants ought to be extensive, Grote argued, it did not really matter if it was co-extensive with the whole community; however, the ballot was “a vital and primary requisite,” since, given the economic dependence the many have on the few, the few—without the ballot—could easily control the votes of the many.<sup>131</sup> In 1820, Mill did not comment upon the Ballot.

The second important difference is found in Grote's argument associated with the question of what the universal interest consists of. According to Grote, different individuals have different interests; in order to “reconcile” these distinct interests, “each must consent to a mutual reduction, and the fraction which remains constitutes the joint interest of the two.” That means, Grote argued, that Mackintosh was “surely incorrect in describing the general interest as composed of different local and professional interests,” since “the very reverse is the fact—the general interest forming a minute component part of every local or professional interest.” There are “but three species of interests in a nation”:

First, the interest of any one man; secondly, that interests so far pared down as to coincide with the interest of a small number, whether consisting of one, two, or more classes; thirdly, the same interest still further amputated until it arrives at the point of unison with that of the whole community, or of the major portion on it.<sup>132</sup>

James Mill found in “Grote's pamphlet, an excellent analysis of Individual interest, Class interest, and National interest”: “the private interest, it appears, is that which is not included in the class interest; the class interest is that which is not included in the public interest. Of these three interests, therefore, each excludes the other.”<sup>133</sup> This was an idea which did not appear either in Mill or Bentham.

When James Mill argued that the “the greatest possible happiness of society is, therefore, attained by insuring to every man the greatest possible quantity of the produce of his labour,” the underlying principle was that which John Stuart Mill noted in his *A System of Logic* (1843), that is, “The laws of the phenomena

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<sup>130</sup> [Grote], *Statement*, 9–12.

<sup>131</sup> [Grote], *Statement*, 18–19.

<sup>132</sup> [Grote], *Statement*, 51–52.

<sup>133</sup> Mill, *CPB*, vol. 1, 179r.

of society are, and can be, nothing but the laws of the actions and passions of human beings united together in the social state."<sup>134</sup> However, Grote seems to have introduced a rather Rousseau-nean idea that the common interest was not the sum total of individual interests, but it rather consisted in the extract or what was left from the process of taking away those aspects of individual interests which are mutually contradictory. According to Rousseau, "cabals" and "partial associations" are formed "at the expense of the general one, the will of each of these associations becomes general, with regard to the particular members of each, and, in itself, particular, with regard to the state."<sup>135</sup>

Thus, the idea of a "unison of interest, between the rulers and the community," which provided the main ground for the widespread assumption that Grote's *Statement* was influenced by Mill's "Government," was interpreted in different ways by them. But both Grote and Mill were faced with a problem.

Bentham maintained that self-interest was the "sole clue" which could be used as an indication of political action by individuals and groups; the monarchical and aristocratical interests formed parts of that "all-comprehensive interest," the universal or democratic interest—however the whole had to struggle not to be sacrificed for the part.<sup>136</sup> In Bentham's *Table of the Springs of Action* (1817), all voluntary acts were traced either to self-regarding or other-regarding interest—no act was considered disinterested.<sup>137</sup> Applying his idea, i.e. that "matter that has been often explained, may be passed over very shortly,"<sup>138</sup> Mill, in "Government", rested his case on this ground—in as much as his Tory opponents had stressed the need for a theory of government to be founded on the weaknesses of humanity validates the bold claim that "clubs or societies of men are governed, like men individually, by their interests, we are surely following a pretty complete experience."<sup>139</sup> And when he did appear too bold to his critics, he asserted that he was simply following Hume's advice all along, that "in contriving any system of government [...] every man ought to be supposed a knave, and to have no other end, in all his actions, than private interest."<sup>140</sup>

<sup>134</sup> J.S. Mill, *Logic*, CW, vol. 7, 879.

<sup>135</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Treatise on the Social Compact; or The Principles of Politic Law* (London: John Murray, 1791), 42–43 (bk. II, ch. 3).

<sup>136</sup> Bentham, *Plan*, xviii.

<sup>137</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *A Table of the Springs of Action* (London: R. Hunter, 1817), 5–16.

<sup>138</sup> See J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 11 Sept. 1819, in Sraffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 8, 67.

<sup>139</sup> Mill, "Government," 25 (33).

<sup>140</sup> James Mill, *Fragment on Mackintosh* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dryer, 1870, or. ed. 1835), 280.

That Mill considered himself to be using the premises of his opponents may explain why he found T.B. Macaulay's (and Mackintosh's) criticism irrational.<sup>141</sup>

Perhaps Grote would have claimed the same thing as did Mill, had he been challenged to explain why he thought that

[w]e must discard, as spurious and inadmissible, all suppositions which presume that men will act contrary to their interests. Fore there is not an individual, who, in the current of private affairs, dares to lose side of this rule of interpreting human conduct, or to act upon any other, for a single hour in his life.<sup>142</sup>

However, Grote's account had a better foundation. In an incomplete manuscript essay on the "Independence of Members of Parliament," which may allude to the same Hume essay to which Mill referred in 1835, Grote noted "there are abundant motives to misgovernment, arising within his [i.e., an MP's] own bosom, without rendering it necessary to call in the vices of a corruption to mislead him."<sup>143</sup> Most importantly, as the following long quote suggests, Grote seemed to have firmly believed that the "class representation" scheme had completely misconceived what the common interest consists in:

nothing is done in modern education to create any extensive sympathies for fellow citizens, or any strong sense of right or obligation connected with the character of a citizen. Much pains are usually taken to implant in the minds of youth feelings suitable to the peculiar station, or rank, or profession, occupied by each. A peculiar code of morality is inculcated upon each individual, according as he makes one of this or that section of society: the common right & obligations appertaining to all remain untold & overlooked, & consequently never become allied with any of the strongest emotions. Men never acquire the habit of contemplating their interest in common as partners in one great political

<sup>141</sup> J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *cw*, vol. 1, 165–67.

<sup>142</sup> [Grote], *Statement*, 8.

<sup>143</sup> George Grote, "Independency of Members of Parliament," British Library Add ms 29529, ff. 37–38, at f. 37v (paper watermarked 1826). The essays of this volume are collectively dated 1818–1822, but the watermarks on the sheets suggest completely different dates, i.e., that they were composed between 1825–9. For example, an essay on the government of medieval Italy is dated with pencil "1817–1818" on the top left hand corner (f. 39r), yet the paper is watermarked 1825. Thus, caution is advised in drawing conclusions as one cannot be sure when these notes (and the ones in Senate House Library MS429, vols. 1–4) were written.

union. Each man dwells upon some separate lot of rights & obligations which attach to him as a member of one of the subordinate fraternities, & the affections which he thus contracts rather tend to sever him from the community than to bind him to it. It is true that each of these several fraternities recognise the duty of obedience & submission to the law, & the habits of a good citizen, to this extent, become tolerably well established. But the law of the land is looked up to as a common superior, not over a great many different individuals, but over a small number of separate fraternities wherein these individuals are respectively enrolled. The *πολιτεία* becomes not *μία*, but *πλείους*, with a sort of federal authority presiding over them.<sup>144</sup>

The reason for the misconception of the common interest is explained in another unpublished manuscript essay: "There is much truth in the distinction which Harrington draws between Ancient Prudence & Modern Prudence, in matters of Government," Grote noted,

the former proposing for solution, how a government should be arranged, on the footing of a common right or interest: the latter adapting government to the interest of one man or of a few men, & merely suggesting contrivance to keep the mass of mankind tolerably satisfied with this subjection.

It would be inconceivable and strange to modern writers, Grote noted, to have "hit upon the supposition of a common right or interest, as the basis on which all their arrangements ought to be framed":

No government such as was exhibited in their view or experience, would have been likely to suggest to them the idea of one common benefit of all the subjects embraced by it, as the grand purpose which is professed to aim at. The nearest approximation to such an idea which they could have been brought to entertain, would have been a classification of the people into certain unchangeable parcels or fractions, each invested as a class with certain determinate rights, & subject to certain determinate obligations: but the rights & obligations of one class differing materially from those of another. To guard & perpetuate this graduated series of

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144 George Grote, "Ancient & Modern Education," British Library Add MS 29529, ff. 29–30, at f. 30v (paper watermarked 1826).

rights & obligations would have been accounted the ultimate perfection of a government.

"In Burke's writings," Grote added, "this ultimate separation of the people into classes or orders is continually alleged as the foundation on which all government ought to be built."<sup>145</sup> Although it is not clear whether Grote had composed these manuscripts essays prior to his meeting with James Mill or not, it is clear that he had reached his conclusions regarding the limitations of class representation system independently of Mill and Bentham.

In *Essentials of Parliamentary Reform* (1831), Grote restated his earlier views.<sup>146</sup> The definition of the "universal interest" was definitely distinct from that of James Mill and Jeremy Bentham:

Individuals compose the class, but the interest of the class is not the sum total of the separate interests of all its members: classes compose the community, but the interest of the community is not the sum total of the separate interests of all its classes. And a governing body which would promote the universal interest, must discard all inclination to the separate interest of any class whatever.<sup>147</sup>

As in his manuscript essay on Harrington and ancient and modern education, Grote observed that the general interest must enter "into every man's feelings of duty" and be attached to the rights and obligations of citizenship, "and those feelings which bind us to our community."<sup>148</sup>

Indeed, we cannot discount the obvious similarities in his mode of argumentation with Mill in particular, i.e., deductive reasoning from established maxims of experience drawing on principles of human nature. However, arguably, this commonality is due to their respective backgrounds in political economy, which was beginning to be established as a deductive science. In an unpublished manuscript on political economy, whose composition most likely began prior to the historian's meeting with Mill, and around the time he met Ricardo, Grote noted:

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145 George Grote, "[Harrington]," British Library Add ms 29529, ff. 1–10, at ff. 8v–10r (paper watermarked 1829).

146 George Grote, *Essentials of Parliamentary Reform* (1831), in *Minor Works*, 8. See also *ibid.* 19 for a combination of a Millian thesis with a Benthamic thesis. The later part of the pamphlet (37 ff.) drew and expanded on James Mill's article on the ballot: "Thoughts on Moderate Reform in the House of Commons," *Westminster Review* 13, no. 25 (1830): 1–39.

147 Grote, *Essentials*, 30.

148 Grote, *Essentials*, 32–3.

The general principles of the science [of political economy] are extracted from a very copious induction of facts, traced up indeed frequently to their sources in the human mind. Fortunately however, it is by no means exposed to the same difficulty & confusion as Morals, Metaphysics & the other sciences in which it is necessary to consider the principles of the human constitution—since the basis on which . . . [the science of political economy] rests consists of a few simple & obvious motives of action, common to the whole species. It requires no very nice view to detect that universal stimulus to exertion, the desire of bettering our condition[.]<sup>149</sup>

Bain was thus right to claim that Grote had developed his argument in *Statement* from "resources peculiar to himself",<sup>150</sup> implying the extent of his intellectual independence to work out epistemological, philosophical and political questions in a way that would satisfy his sense of discipline and objectivity.

## 6

As we saw, Mill's and Grote's works were largely based on principles originally expounded by Bentham. However, their arguments differed in two important ways: first, they had different views on what the "universal interest" consisted of; second, they directed their arguments to different targets; Mill aimed at a general anti-reform, Tory audience, whereas Grote targeted a pro-reform, even if moderate, Whig audience. John Stuart Mill noted in 1837, "those whom . . . we call philosophic radicals, are those who in politics observe the common practice of philosophers—that is, who, when they are discussing means, begin by considering the end, and when they desire to produce effects, think of causes."<sup>151</sup> Even though the term "Philosophic Radicalism" did not appear until after the 1830s, both James Mill's and George Grote's works in early 1820s had already defined the broad lines on which that type of radicalism would soon grow and thrive.<sup>152</sup>

149 George Grote, "Short Abstract of the General Principles of Political Economy," British Library Add ms 29530, ff 3r-4r (paper watermarked 1815), date inserted in the volume: 1818–1823.

150 Bain, "Grote's Character," [9], [1].

151 J.S. Mill, "Fonblanque's England under Seven Administrations" (1837), *cw*, vol. 6, 353.

152 I would like to thank Kyriakos N. Demetriou and Georgios Varouxakis for suggesting discussions and inestimable advice on James Mill and George Grote. I would also like to thank the staff of British Library and Senate House Library, and in particular Tansy Barton. I am also indebted to Sarah Cahill and George Loizides for their readiness to facilitate my research in every way possible.



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## George Grote and Natural Religion

*John R. Gibbins*

In *Family Fortunes: Men and Women in the English Middle Class 1780–1850*, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, explore the difficult process of bringing the usually concealed private lives of families into the public gaze. How can authors explore the inner world of families and their members, when the dynamics of social life, demanded that most of the private sphere be concealed.<sup>1</sup> Biographers and historians have to face a battery of obstacles in their efforts to locate inner thoughts and motives of individuals, the dynamics of family relationships, the intentions and reasons for displaying or concealing information, the role of ideologies of respectability and duty in the governance of public presentation, the roles of matriarchy and patriarchy in surveillance and control of information flows. But the ultimate bastion of control to be conquered by historians, are the gatekeepers to knowledge, of the family archives. Those who manage access are able to set limits to what can be known and narrated.

As the domain of the private was extended in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the power of gatekeepers to manage the status and welfare of the family became greater. Architects found ways to conceal bodies and their functions behind closed doors; fathers and brothers were able to manage females in space, by controlling bodily access into and out of the house. Mothers cooperated, subjecting their children and servants to regimes of surveillance, discipline and control. But it is the regulation of the flow of information that is my focus here. While patriarchy demanded that men were sovereign in the home, their usual travels into the public realm meant an enhanced role for women in managing the status, standing, reputation, authority and power of the family. Within the ideology of respectability and duty that dominated George Grote's life, the lot fell to women, mothers, wives and daughters to manage the families fortunes, both present and posthumously.

Answering the question I will ask about George Grote's life and ideas is a task handicapped by the role of the gatekeepers to his inner feelings, intentions and even his writings. Locating his feelings, views, arguments, statements

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<sup>1</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women in the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 2002), xxvi.

and even his writings about religion, is problematised from the first by the editorial influence of his mother, Selina Grote, but more by the power of his wife, Harriet Grote. Selina, we know, had every reason to conceal her eldest son's flirtations with philosophy: materialism, scepticism, empiricism, associational psychology, utilitarianism, radicalism and atheism, were not going to enhance the families fortunes in Beckenham or Henley upon Thames, while it might so do for George amongst the Philosophic Radicals in London.

The indomitable Harriet, left with her husband's manuscripts and reputation in her hands, had no interest in revealing anything of substance about George's religious leanings. Knowing via personal experience, exactly what they were, the boundary of her choices was marked by two preoccupations. As a welcomed and authoritative member of the English elite, evidenced with honours and notable roles, which took subscription to Christianity as a given, it was inconceivable that she should condone the publication of letters or manuscripts that revealed serious qualifications, let alone complete rejection. Her husband received a Christian burial and had been interred in a sepulchre at Westminster Abbey recently at a ceremony of great pomp, attended by such notables as John Mill, Dean Stanley, Earl's Granville and Stanhope, Lord Overton banker and historian, Lords Romilly and Belper, Robert Lowe, Benjamin Jowett and many others. Alexander Bain reported, "Mill disliked his being buried in the Abbey, but of course attended the funeral. He resisted the proposal that he should be one of the pall-bearers, and gave way only under great pressure. As he and I walked out together, his remark was—'In no very long time, I shall be laid in the ground with a very different ceremonial than that' though a prayer was read over his own grave."<sup>2</sup> Dean Stanley dodged the issue of religious affiliation with the inscription, "The righteous man shall be in everlasting remembrance." On the other boundary, being proud of her husband's role in developing and implementing the agenda's of the Philosophical Radicals, she could not condone denial of his subscription to its broadly secular agenda, which included the identification of the Established Church as a "Sinister Interest" and religion as a barrier to human progress. Leslie Stephen, the best contemporary intellectual historian of early English Utilitarianism, had stated the obvious, subscription to philosophical utilitarianism, "logically implied the rejection of theology."<sup>3</sup> The solution adopted was predictable, present George as a free thinker, a "secular apostle," who at most flirted with

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2 Alexander Bain, *J.S. Mill: A Criticism with Personal Recollections* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1882), 133.

3 Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, 3 vols. (London: Duckworth, 1900), vol. 2, 40.



agnosticism. Harriet filtered her husband's legacy by taking out, we must presume, any sources that controverted this impression, and in particular those that dealt with the key issue of this essay, George Grote's position on atheism.

A similar process and dynamic befell the manuscripts of George's younger brother John, who died in 1866 while holding the Knightbridge Chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Cambridge. As described by his editor, Joseph Bickersteth Mayor, married by then to the brothers niece, Alexandrina (Allie) Jessie Grote/Mayor, and now Professor of Moral Philosophy at Kings College, London, the surviving manuscript collection was extensive, but contained even more than was listed here.<sup>4</sup> Twenty years of search for these papers, eventually led in 1989 to an archive in the hands of Jessie's granddaughter, Teresa Lady Rothschild/Mayor, now held in the archives of Trinity and Kings Colleges, Cambridge. Of immense importance as they are, their value is diminished by the activities of two gatekeepers to John's reputation, another niece Alice Mayor, and Grote's appointed literary editor, Joseph. In 1990 I located a letter in the archives from Joseph's son and Cambridge Apostle, Robert (Robin) John Grote Mayor, to the philosopher William Sorley, who was searching for the lost papers in 1934. The letter reported that the key philosophical manuscripts and personal papers had been collected from, friends and burned on a bonfire in the garden of Joseph Mayor's Vicarage, at Kingston Hill in 1916, at the most depressing period of the war. Robin narrates that his father ordered this act, for he feared that the actions of future editors might damage John's posthumous reputation.<sup>5</sup> But Robin's sisters, shocked, distressed and opposed, had scurried around the garden secreting diaries, letters and manuscripts in their clothing and rooms. It was these papers, plus the personal archives of Alexandrina and her bother Robin and his wife, that came into my possession, what was left of another effort at legacy management.

What became apparent was that I was not the first investigator searching for the lost manuscripts, and that the family, and especially Alice in whose house in Lensfield Road, Cambridge, where they were stored, were adept at concealment. Before me it was apparent that the Trinity philosopher Charles Dunbar Broad had made it his mission to search out the papers and to bring them to Trinity. He had occasional small successes, a few letters from Sidgwick, Leslie Stephen, John Venn, J. R. Mozley and other members of the *Grote Society*, about its activities and Grote's role as convenor in stimulating famous careers.

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4 John Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica*, Part II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), v–xii.

5 R. Mayor, 1934, Mayor Papers, Kings College Library (abbreviated to Mayor; Sorley, 1934, Mayor Papers, Trinity College, MSS B22/12/13).

But Lauchlin D. MacDonald and myself in the 1960's, were told bluntly that the papers no longer existed, but Broad knew of their existence and kept up the pursuit.<sup>6</sup> My archival work revealed the extensive editorial work undertaken by Alice, evidenced in numerous ripped pages from the only authentic *Journal Notebook* kept from 1833–1839.<sup>7</sup>

Very few primary sources now exist on which we can build a definitive answer to the most interesting questions about George Grote's affiliations to religion. What we do have does allow us to make a qualified proposal, a hypothesis for future researchers to check out. We have a few surviving personal family letters, which relate to religion, and one especially provides extremely reliable evidence of how George advised family and friends who were experiencing religious doubt. A second set of sources are George's published works, especially his *History*, and his *Minor Works*, philosophical works promoting views that undermine religious beliefs, especially associational psychology.<sup>8</sup> But the most important primary source for us is the anonymously edited and written utilitarian estimation of the utility of religion, published in 1822 as *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*, reprinted in 1866 and 1875, London, under the pseudonym Philip Beauchamp.<sup>9</sup> Secondary texts abound and are less helpful and decided, but highest in value are those produced by Grote's closest family and friends, a list headed by Harriet, but followed close on, by Alexander Bain, Croom Robertson, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and others. Subsequent interpreters divide on many issues concerning Grote and religion, but the most to be respected are those closest to the surviving manuscripts. Three members of the *Bentham Project* have had regular access to many of the manuscript base and hence their views are privileged though divergent, Catherine Fuller, James Crimmins and Philip Schofield. Sadly, the author has not enjoyed access to the London based primary sources, and relies for evidence here on sources quoted

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6 Lauchlin D. MacDonald, *John Grote: A Critical Estimation of His Writings* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

7 Alice Mayor, *Notebook*, Mayor, B24/75; John Grote *Notebook*; Mayor, C12/57; John R. Gibbins, *John Grote, Cambridge University and the Development of Victorian Thought* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007), 72.

8 George Grote, *A History of Greece*, 8 vols. (London: John Murray, 1862); Grote, *The Minor Works of George Grote, with Remarks on His Intellectual Character, Writing and Speeches*, ed. Alexander Bain (London: John Murray, 1873).

9 George Grote [Philip Beauchamp], *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* (London: R. Carlile, 1822 [reprinted 1866, 1875]); found in *Utilitarians and Religion*, ed. James Crimmins (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1998), 345–383.

by those who have. Several biographers have provided useful sources, the most dependable being, *George Grote: A Biography* by M.L. Clarke.<sup>10</sup>

For reasons of focus, brevity and scholarly interest I have avoided largely, several legitimate and important questions: Did George's attitudes predate his acquaintances with James Mill, Ricardo and Bentham? Did Bentham influence the early Grote's views on religion, and how? What were Bentham's views on the religion and what status did they have within his corpus?<sup>11</sup> How do the original manuscript notes provided by Bentham, compare to George's published *Analysis*? How do Grote's views in the *Analysis*, compare and contrast with his analysis of religion to the Ancient Greeks in his *History*? I also accept the historical account of the gestation of the *Analysis* from Bentham's manuscripts to publication as given by Catherine Fuller in her definitive 2008 article, though I differ slightly to her on interpretation of Grote's position on religion.<sup>12</sup>

What then are the questions to be answered in this essay, and what do I argue below? What context is required to allow us to understand George Grote on Natural Religion? My answer points to the contexts of family and friends, and specifically to the maternal influence of the evangelical near Calvinist, Selina Mary Peckwell. Next was George Grote an Atheist? An Agnostic? A Don't Know? My hypothesis points towards an atheistic interpretation, rather than the agnosticism suggested by Fuller.<sup>13</sup> Grote chose not to aligned himself with the school of "Free Thinkers," who bought tolerance because of their subscription to the radical tenet of Protestantism, that each person alone was answerable to God and to him alone for their views on religion, a position which I suspect applies to Bentham and many other Philosophical Radicals.

10 Martin Lowther Clarke, *George Grote: A Biography* (London: Athlone Press, 1962).

11 James Crimmins, *Religion, Secularization and Political Thought: Hobbes to Mill* (London: Routledge, 1989); Crimmins, *Secular Utilitarianism: Social Science and the Critique of Religion in the Thought of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Crimmins, "Bentham's Political Radicalism Re-examined," *Journal of History of Ideas* 54 (1994): 259–281; Crimmins, "Bentham's Religious Radicalism Revisited: A Response to Schofield," *History of Political Thought* 22 (2001): 494–500; Crimmins, *Utilitarian Philosophy and Politics: Bentham's Latter Years* (London: Continuum, 2011); Philip Schofield, "Political and Religious Radicalism in the Thought of Jeremy Bentham," *History of Political Thought* 20 (1999): 272–291; Schofield, *Utilitarianism and Democracy: The Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 171–198.

12 Catherine Fuller, "Bentham, Mill, Grote, and *Analysis of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*," *Journal of Bentham Studies* 10 (2008).

13 Fuller, "Bentham," 14.

What sort of an Atheist was Grote? Textual and contextual analysis suggests the primary character of Grote's atheism was philosophical, embracing a number of self reinforcing elements from ontological monistic materialism—a character he developed alongside and shared closely with, his friend Alexander Bain;<sup>14</sup> associational psychology learned from James Mill; an epistemological epiphenomenalism which rejects “extra phenomenal” data and “fictitious entities” shared with Bentham, meaning that thought and feelings are mental *by products* of a physical process, which can be reduced under analysis to physical process as exhibited with lightning and thunder. Grote blends these elements with a hedonistic version of utilitarian radical politics he gained from Jeremy Bentham. Grote found succour for his views amongst some Ancient Greek precursors including Epicurus, the Sceptics, Sophists, Cynics and Lucretius, whom he contrasts the more idealistic Socratics. Did his attitudes concur with those of Bentham on religious matters? Apart from ‘free thinking,’ in effect the views of the two contributors coincided, but my view is that Grote's presentation is far more effective and pointed. Bentham disguised his atheism in his works on religion, allowing multiple interpretations of his affiliations, while Grote did not in the *Analysis*, his views being both more transparent and closed.

What were Grote's intentions in regard to publishing the *Analysis*, and were his purposes realised? Grote had in mind a series of targeted institutions supported by natural religion, whose authority he wished to attack and undermine, the Established Church, Church Schools and affiliated Universities, but he also had in his sights competing reforming bodies, including the Broad Church, Christian Socialists, Evangelicals, Non-Conformists and other Ecumenical Bodies blunting the programme of the Philosophical Radicals. In this Grote's *Analysis* failed to have much effect, being neither widely read, nor widely acted upon. In clarifying his own mind, in forcing Bentham's hand, and in providing John Mill and others with a script for attacking natural religion and theism he succeeded well. But as a person, Grote was dealing more with religious practices, a form of which that had blighted his youth. The *Analysis* may best be read as a response to youthful maternal oppression, but in effect, it is a brilliant polemical calculation and expose of the misery and waste that religion unintentionally imposes upon human beings, societies and states. Reading this text in the contemporary context of fundamentalist religious

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14 Alexander Bain, *The Senses and the Intellect* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1855); Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (London: J.W. Parker, 1859); Bain, *On the Study of Character* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1861); Bain, *Mental and Moral Sciences: A Compendium of Psychology and Ethics* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1868); Bain, *Mind and Body: The Theories of Their Relation* (London: Henry King, 1873).

phenomena exhibited in the role of evangelicalism in the Americas, Shia and Sunni factionalism and civil wars in the Middle East, should be a salutatory, but useful experience.

Numerous sources shed light upon the dynamics of the Grote family. Grote's own father, Grote Senior, in spite of his preference for the life of a country gentleman, was obliged to take over the estates at Ashdown and Blackheath and the running of the family bank, on the death of his stepbrother Joseph in 1814.<sup>15</sup> From various letters between George and his parents we can gather that relationships were often strained. George Grote did not react well to this, he remained uncommitted to the Bank and sought interest and amusement in the wider society of London and the provinces, staying most of his time at his bank and house at 51, Threadneedle Street, London. But in 1793 in an effort to settle down he had married Miss Selina Mary Peckwell (1774–1845) and started a family of eleven, the eldest child of which was George Grote junior, born in 1794 and destined to become the famous historian of Greece, radical M.P. and Philosophical Radical. From this point Grote's father seems to have turned gradually from "a man of the world" into a stern and severe recluse, uninclined towards the education of his children and particularly determined to keep them from an academic and a church career, while his mother retreated into a dour, forbidding, puritanical form of Calvinism.

The process seems to have been brought about by the weight of maternal responsibility causing the growing intolerance of Grote's mother, Selina Mary Grote (1774–1845) who seems to have turned after her marriage from being gay, sociable and intelligent to becoming excessively serious minded and very strict in her religious views and practices.<sup>16</sup> Selina was the daughter of Oxford educated and well connected evangelical clergyman Dr Henry Peckwell (1747–1787) and the last survivor of a mixed French and Irish Protestant gentry family, Bella Blosset.<sup>17</sup> Family ties pushed her towards narrow evangelicalism, the Dutch Reform and the Moravian Churches. A wider social life was enjoyed by Selina's brother Robert Henry who adopted the Blosset name and as Sir Henry Blosset (1776–1823) enjoyed a successful legal career after Oxford ending as the Lord Chief Justice of Bengal.<sup>18</sup> The family situation had changed even more by the time George was born. His mother had not only withdrawn from society outside of her home and church, but she even declined to receive

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15 Mayor C3/1–12.

16 Clarke, *George Grote*, 2; Mayor C4/1–39.

17 "Henry Peckwell," *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 15 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1909): 643; Mayor B24/64.

18 "Henry Blosset," *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 15: 643; Mayor B24/65.

visitors, including all her husband's friends, who did not share her religious beliefs.<sup>19</sup> She assumed the role of head of the home and in all but the most serious matters ignored her husband. The atmosphere created in the home according to Harriet Grote, wife of the historian George Grote, and herself possessed of a domineering character, was

besides its dullness and vapidness so positively disheartening a quality—tending to quench every spark of mental activity and ambition—that it might perfectly well have dried up the springs of young Grote's genius and talent.<sup>20</sup>

Only his mother's love and playing of music, especially Handel, her philanthropic activity and visits to equally high minded friends provided relief and John benefited from occasional visits to stay with George and Harriet as he got older, "It does me a world of good giving to George, it shakes up my mind to see old George's patient love of a classical book, and the activity of mind of Mrs Harriet absolutely makes me a bit alive . . . what a woman she is".<sup>21</sup>

But a dismal and melancholy atmosphere pervades the letters of Mrs Selina Grote to her son Joseph.<sup>22</sup> In July 1817 she wrote "Oh that all my children might seek God in the days of their youth, might be convinced of their sinful state by nature of their condemnation in the sight of God, and be led to seek refuge in a crucified Saviour."<sup>23</sup> It was not surprising that brother Arthur had run off to sea and understandable that George and the other sons should have left home so early and returned home so infrequently to the series of large and cold country houses owned by Selina Grote. After her husband's death Selina, who had been denied use of the family coach and horses by her husband to attend church, ordered them brought to the house and rode out in triumph. John Grote remained the closest and most tolerant son to his mother, which, due to difficulties in marriage arrangements between George and his parents, might go to explain a possible coolness between John and his sister in law Harriet.<sup>24</sup>

Liberal theology and Broad Church tolerance and social welfare activities marked John's different reaction to his mother's tyrannical reign, while George took to up the more radical route to atheism. None of the children survived

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19 Harriet L. Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote* (London: John Murray, 1873), Ch. 1.

20 Harriet Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote*, 12–13.

21 Mayor C12/57; Mayor, B24/54, B24/59; Alice Mayor, "John Grote," *Chronicles*, B24/74, p. 4.

22 Selina M. Grote, *Letters from the Late Mrs Grote to Her Fourth Son* (London, 1877).

23 Selina M. Grote, *Letters*, 1–3.

24 S. Gelber, *The Philosophy of John Grote*, Unpublished thesis (Colorado University, 1954), 2–3.



unscathed, non-adopted their mothers or fathers attitudes and practices. John became an Anglican vicar, the youngest Frank went off the rails and decamped to Canada, Arthur, the next eldest, took up scholarly work on Indian anthropology, Robert went to die young in India in the service of the East India Company following a brilliant Hailebury career, with religious devotion intact, writing home, "I find the presence of my heavenly Father sweetly vouchsafed for me. I enjoy the books I have around me especially the best of books the Bible." This was needed as one by one family and friends succumbed to death there, brother Frederick following his wife and first child in 1827, and Robert himself succumbing a year later. Andrew Grote followed in the mid 1830's following wife and child. All the black edged letters home were written in the morbid Calvinistic style expected by the mother. Selina, the only daughter, also died in India in 1827, a year after her marriage. George himself was childless, Harriet losing their only baby soon after birth.<sup>25</sup> George witnessed the complete failure of religious faith to either save lives, nor to offer comfort to the bereaved in his family.

George had a model for religious doubt in his father. We do not have documentary evidence, but his actions suggest a man who doubted the evidence for faith, considered the Churches and their practices as distraction from the important things in life, had no time for church attendance nor ritual, considered time devoted to church affairs as wasted, and who did all he could to prevent such engagements in the family while he lived. Friends did what they could for George, during his formative years, and he had many and good especially during the formative years around Beckenham in Kent. We know two were especially helpful in offering him debate over religious and political matters, including George Warde Norman a co-explorer of political economy and Charles Hay Cameron, who used his legal training to evaluate negatively, the claims of religion.<sup>26</sup> But coming into the company of the Philosophical Radicals, provided the validation of views on economics, politics and religion that he had already developed, a narrative too well known to need repeating here.<sup>27</sup>

George had several optional responses to religion as well as to his circumstances. Like his father he could have just become a non-practicing non-believer, otherwise engaging with conventions for the sake of propriety and business. This option he rejected. He had witnessed the distress that this schizophrenic existence brought his father and was committed to avoiding the same fate. He concluded that parental affection as an, "unremitting endeavour

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25 Clarke, *George Grote*, 3–4.

26 Clarke, *George Grote*, 9, 17–18.

27 Clarke, *George Grote*, 19–23.



on the part of a father to compensate his children for the misery, both here and hereafter, which existence has conferred on him.”<sup>28</sup> If he was to marry it had to be with someone like minded, and he found this in Harriet Lewin.<sup>29</sup> The second option was to encourage the label and association with the ‘free thinking’ tradition. This survival of early Protestantism, it allowed individuals the right to form their own opinions on religion, independent of authority, power, convention or tradition. God alone made you, and you are alone responsible to him for your thoughts, words and deeds, then sovereignty in reason and choice must be granted the individual. As Priestman argues, this option was favoured by the Romantic poets and artists from Shelly and Keats to Blake.<sup>30</sup> Philip Schofield places Bentham within this tradition, while opposing, “the oppressive effects of religious establishment, he was, arguably, calling for religious liberty, not enforced atheism.”<sup>31</sup> While tempted by the example of Bentham, Grote decided against this stance. Angered and hostile to religion and the church he wanted to post his opposition and do all he could to remove or mitigate its worst effects. This also explains his refusal to accept the option of quietism, just keeping silent about inner thoughts, building a boundary between the private and public spheres. Grote was committed to public radical political strategies to bring about useful change and quietism was incompatible.

What then of agnosticism, denying the need or ability to decide, on the grounds that God was, “unknown and unknowable.”<sup>32</sup> Several reasons militated against this. Such fence sitting would have neither of the benefits of subscription nor non-subscription, the agnostic being distrusted by both sides and supported by neither. The agnostic was open to the argument that they lacked either or both the reason and the faith to decide and act. The felicific calculus when applied revealed that agnosticism was not a useful or beneficial stance on religious matters. An attack on the citadels of the Established Church could not be mounted from such a fragile castle. Other options remained, a favourite being some kind of pantheism of the kind adopted by Coleridge. Here God is dethroned by being incorporated into everything and nothing, a kind of vague figment or vapour, immanent but never personal, there but not here. Grote’s other core commitments would not allow this option credibility,

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28 George Grote, *Posthumous Papers: Comprising Selections from Family Correspondence During Half a Century* (London: Clowes [for Private Circulation], 1874), 18–19.

29 Clarke, *George Grote*, 10–17.

30 M. Priestman, *Romantic Atheism: Poetry and Free Thought 1780–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

31 Schofield, “Political and Religious Radicalism,” 288.

32 Fuller, “Bentham,” 14.

it would be incoherent with a monistic form of materialism and epiphenomenalism that he and Alexander Bain espoused. By a process of elimination plus utilitarian calculation, atheism became the most attractive option, militated against mainly by the likely negative impacts, the social sanctions that were heaped on such adherents at the time. Atheism was heresy, it was criminal as well as considered heathen and hence immoral. Grote saw at first hand that his own editor Richard Carlile, attracted imprisonment for publication of atheistic tracts and wished to avoid that humiliation. "Publish, and don't be damned," was the best felicitic option, attract the benefits but not the pains by publishing anonymously with a pseudonym. The case for anonymity he made again for himself, when commenting upon Mill's openness shown in his next anonymous review of Mill's *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, of 1865, reprinted in the *Minor Works*, praising the "more cautious proceedings of men like Herodotus."<sup>33</sup>

The argument in *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*, was as clear a case of Atheism as there was in within the intellectual elite in England at the time, and had an immediate impact on the younger Mill, who on reflection, felt it made, "the argument too hard."<sup>34</sup> Grote, and more obviously his family, did all they could to disguise his authorship until after his death, because they did not want to incur the costs of full disclosure—explicable in classic utilitarian terms. Why attract varied and unjustified pains and losses from an enemy who you regarded as amoral, pains to your self, family, your movement and cause, when they can be avoided by the simple expedient of anonymity and silence? Why not reap the benefits of undermining your opponents—their religion and their Established Church, with the fewest costs possible appertaining to your supporters and friends? No reason at all was the answer, so George, being a coherent utilitarian, chose a pseudonym, Philip Beauchamp, published in 1822 and avoided the negative consequences of other policy options.

What are the evidence and the argument that leads to the atheist inference? We must begin with the text of the *Analysis* itself, which remained little changed from 1822 to the third edition in 1875. Like Stephen, Clarke, Crimmins and Fuller, I adopt the narrative of the gestation of this text. Bentham, in early 1821, "delivered four volumes of illegible notes, now in the British Museum

33 George Grote, *Minor Works*; David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain: from Hobbes to Russell* (London, Routledge, 1990), 238–241.

34 John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. Harold Laski (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), 58–9; Mill, *Three Essays on Religion: Nature, Utility of Religion, Theism* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1885), 76.

(Library)," to George Grote with the invitation to put them into a form for publication.<sup>35</sup> Grote returned them in November 1822. His role as editor/author was not acknowledged publicly until 1875. Grote struggled with legibility, translation and disorganisation tasks, then decided on a new strategy. Why not condense Bentham's core views and strategy into some simple form then present these ideas and develop them in ways that would be comprehensible to contemporary readers? Why not write your own book using the bequeathed manuscripts as guides and prompts? As Catherine Fuller adjudicates, "A fair summation of Grote's work as a whole is that it echoes Bentham's text and summaries, but is written to accommodate Grote's own thoughts, and in his style."<sup>36</sup> Stephen notes, "I think, that Grote's share in the work was a good deal more than mere editing."<sup>37</sup> Berman's conclusion is similar, that, "After examining the four extant manuscript volumes, is that the *Analysis* is largely the work of Grote, though inspired by Bentham's point of view... Grote as the major and Bentham the minor partner."<sup>38</sup> Schofield prefers to see the *Analysis* as, "in effect an expansion and elaboration of the views of Bentham had expressed in the mid-1770's."<sup>39</sup> Crimmins calls the work, "editing and reworking his (Bentham's) existing manuscripts," leading to, "substantial rewriting."<sup>40</sup> Reader judges that the *Analysis*, "was actually composed by the lifelong Benthamite George Grote, based upon Bentham's unpublished manuscripts."<sup>41</sup>

But what of the argument of the text? Does this define the author as an atheist? As was the strategy of the Radicals, Grote, like Bentham before and John Mill afterwards, avoided the question of the truth of the existence of God. They left that question unanswered, in abeyance, hinting that it could not be answered satisfactorily on the basis of accepted methods in science, mathematics or logic.<sup>42</sup> The conventional answers relied upon a series of dubious propositions, such as "God created the World," and invalid inference, such as "He created us in his own image." What all the Radicals agreed was that all attempts at answering the question involved references to "extra evidential

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35 BL Add. MSS. 29, 806–9; Clarke, *George Grote*, 30–2; Fuller, "Bentham"; Stephen, *English Utilitarians*; Crimmins, *Utilitarians and Religion*, 341–3.

36 Fuller bibliographic source, 10.

37 Stephen, *English Utilitarians*, vol. 2, 339 and vol. 1, 316.

38 Berman bibliographic source, 192.

39 Schofield, *Utilitarianism and Democracy*, 187.

40 Crimmins, *Utilitarian Philosophy*, 29.

41 Linda Reader, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity* (London: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 28.

42 George Grote, *Analysis*, iv.

data,” to “fictitious entities,” and unquestionable beliefs. This accounts for religions based upon Revelation. But the other ground quoted for religious conviction is Faith, and this was a matter of sentiment, not open to scrutiny by reason, nor evidence. Grote, therefore begins in Chapter 1 Part 1 of the *Analysis* with some ground clearing, but not before the object of the exercise is stated clearly in the Preface, an “examination of the temporal good or evil produced by Natural Religion,” on “the gain or loss accruing from the agency of Natural Religion.”<sup>43</sup> Stated bluntly, the intention is to subject religions in general, and Christianity in particular in Britain, to the felicific calculus, part of the science hedonics or hedonology as defined by George’s brother John.<sup>44</sup>

Theological arguments for the existence of God on the grounds of faith and revelation are excluded in favour of an account of what can be observed, measured, tested, evidenced, inferred from and judged by ordinary human faculties—and this he calls, *Natural Religion*.<sup>45</sup> This is fair game to Grote, as religions have taken it upon themselves for centuries to analyse and judge the existence of things in the world, the validity of empirical and moral arguments from the vantage point of their religious paradigm and presuppositions. Now it was the turn of philosophers and logicians, applying their own secular paradigms, in judgement of the claims made by religious authorities, that subscription to their beliefs, institutions and practices, provides beneficial outcomes to sentient creatures on earth. Grote wishes to test the hypothesis that, “Religion, unassisted by revelation, is the foe and not the benefactor of mankind,” and to test the thesis that, “Natural Religion has produced a large balance of temporal evil above temporal good.”<sup>46</sup> An insightful summary of the *Analysis* can be found in volume 2 of Stephen’s *English Utilitarians*.<sup>47</sup>

Chapter 1 lists some of the felicific claims made on behalf of religions: to supply “social bonds to different members of society”; to be a “curb on immoral and unsocial passions of individuals”; to form “the consolation and support of misfortunes”—collectively identified as, “the most efficient prop both of inward happiness and of virtuous practice in the world” (Grote 1822, 1). Grote claims these benefits can be, and are generally attained, via secular devices such as those provided by education, civic morality and ethics, the rule of law,

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43 George Grote, *Analysis*, iii–iv.

44 John Grote, 1870, 181–2, 344–7. *An Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1870).

45 George Grote, *Analysis*, iv–vi.

46 George Grote, *Analysis*, v.

47 Stephen, *English Utilitarians*, 338–361.

efficient government and medicine, which benefits religions falsely claims to be the cause (2). This leads to the vital chapter II which tests the proposition, that, “the belief of posthumous pains and pleasures, then to be administered by an omnipotent Being, is useful to mankind—that is, productive of happiness or misery in the present life” (3). Grote gets to his task immediately, what are the consequences for us of believing in divine future punishment or reward on our lives on earth? The answer is unavoidable, the effect of the anticipation of divine punishment, ruins lives. Here John and George agree, the younger brother making the case that religious behaviour should not be so grounded, and that fear of divine retribution should be discounted when making moral judgements in this life.<sup>48</sup> Both agree that the future state, life, heaven and hell, are impervious to human knowledge, George adding the rider that, “the imagination usurps the privilege of filling the void” with terrible scenes that fill humans with fear and dread (4–5). So paralyzed with fear, “we are reduced to a state of unprotected helplessness,” with, all anticipation of future ease’ destroyed. Religion, in short, makes our futures, “pregnant to our affrighted imagination, with calamity from which we knew not how to shelter ourselves’ and our present, ‘fraught with misery and torment” (7). While anticipation of a future life furnished with sources of exquisite pleasures, is possible, both the ability of pain to trump pleasure, and the role of established churches militate against this.

Unlike human laws and social morality, religion is unable to provide us with agreed, clear rules of conduct, as God alone knows what we ought to do, and we have accepted that Revelation is not allowed in this argument (10–12). We have to judge, without clear guidance, and anticipate posthumous punishment for each false step. All of human life is then full of trepidation, confidence is denied us. None of us can know how God will calculate our sins? What rules we follow, will depend upon the construct we have formed of the unknowable Being. In expected utilitarian fashion, Grote argues that humans have an alternative, the helpful capacity of experience, and the ability to learn from experience over time (30). But religion directs us to ignore the guidance of experience in favour of conformity to obscure unknown and unknowable (except by revelation) rules (12–13). This stops us doing what is beneficial on grounds of experience, supplanting benefice with misfortunes arising from the sacrifice. A faith in the propositions for a benevolent God and a providential world are substituted for experience, trial and error, human tradition and artefact as guides. But the author notes with some alarm, that many believers replace even this Payleyian faith, with the even more painful alternative,

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48 John Grote, “On a Future State,” *The Contemporary Review* 18 (1871): 133–140.

a vengeful deity full of “caprice and tyranny” (16). It is observed that the normal practices of humans following the caprices of an unknown and unobservable entity, where judgements made are hence incomprehensible, is madness (17–19). Application of moral epithets, praise and blame, become subject to our constructions of the Supreme Being, detached from judgement, human rules and experience, having deleterious consequences, as we might see today, evidenced with contemporary management of suicide bombers (20–23). Where the applications of praise and blame, become detached from conformity to known rules, human exploitation and misfortune follow (22–23). Likewise, deferential slavish behaviour motivated to attract divine reward deviates us from making wise and providential choices here and now. Humans are open to mis-ascribe character to God. Trying how to please such a God is at best difficult, at worst hopeless and counterproductive. A utilitarian version of Hegel’s master and slave theory follows, a phenomenology of serving an unknowable but despotic master (28–31). “Experience announces to us what practices will recommend us to the favour of terrestrial potentates, and what will provoke enmity,” but that does not apply to Natural Religion (28). A kind of inverse or reverse scale of approbation to any based upon humanistic, republican or civic morality follows from this error, leading to praise for deferential priests and the highest abomination for free thinking atheists (31).

How the duties of humans become deformed by following out the dictates of Natural Religion follows. Fathers, tradesmen, trustees are all deflected from their normal social and legal duties, searching to satisfy superior obligations (36). If religion disappeared, he argues that normal duties according to roles and stations would continue without misfortune attaching. However, when a religion arrives, “we observe the most innocuous of human pleasures crminated” with a felicific loss all round (39). Allowing religious duties to trump ones temporal is detrimental to human felicity, an observation that Max Weber would question later (41). Testing the saliency of super-human inducements Grote considers near impossible, but with the tests he has, he concludes, “that they are almost wholly inefficient on every occasion when it might have been possible for them to enlarge the sum of temporal happiness—and efficient only in cases where they swell the amount of temporal misery” (53). Criminal sanctions prove most efficient using the same criteria for testing. Notwithstanding this, Grote asks why the religious sanctions remain promoted in society? He argues that they play on the behavioural effects of pleasure and pain in this life, but ascribe these to the after life. The future life offers a heavenly utilitarian calculation, whereby we calculate costs in our life here on the basis of outcomes after death. A personal and social dynamic grows which requires anyone attempting to be useful in this life to

disguise their motives as religious, the costs of these pretences imposing great losses in human felicity all round (55–58). He evidences the failure of religious super-human inducements with worked-out examples of Christianity's failures to effectively limit such crimes as duelling, fornication, simony, and perjury. The last case is evidenced with examples of Oxford University entrants mocking treatment of the Thirty Nine Articles, which induces non subscribers into the role of "secret criminals" (60–62). Part I ends with the conclusive finding that, "the inquiry has demonstrated that the agency of super-human motives must in the larger aggregate of instances, produce effects decidedly pernicious to earthly happiness" (66). Knowledge of the here and now, is the best antidote to the perpetual suffering that natural religion will continue to induce.

Part II of the *Analysis* looks into a series of other unfortunate outcomes that follow from subscription to Natural Religion other than from subscription to super-human agency. Religion encourages unhappiness by prescribing what Hume labelled the "monkish virtues," useless and counter-productive practices, such as fasting, self abnegation, celibacy, denial of washing, denial of access to medicine and health care, seclusion from social company, surrender of ones property or dignity by public admonition and self torture and many other forms of self denial. As the proscribed activities are usually productive of happiness, individuals are left unfulfilled, repressed and often develop forms of mental illness as a direct result of subscription. Self-privations produce much intentional pain, with little or no measurable benefit (69–71). Encouragement of religious aestheticism, however, produces the greatest ire in the author. Grote shared with Bentham the argument that St Paul and St Peter had misdirected the early Christian Church from Jesus worldliness into aestheticism, self-denial and the belief in incurable human sin. The resulting waste to human happiness is something neither figures could forgive. When any kind of frivolity, amusement, adornment, is identifiable with sin, human pleasure is open theft by pain.

Chapter 3 in part II catalogues the evident results of such self-abnegations, beginning with a catalogue of mental illnesses which Sigmund Freud would have both recognised in cause and effect. Religious anxiety, or *Escrupulus*, dominates the list, and could be used to describe the state of mind of the young Martin Luther. It covers the symptoms of those dwelling excessively and perpetually on hopes and fears connected to the ever present but invisible world (73). Contemplation of the traps, shortcomings, impossible standards, inevitable failings stretching before them, Christians are prone to perpetual anxiety, "agonizing fears" that often lead nuns and monks into "untimely death or insanity" (74). John Grote reported a kind of indolence that sometimes engulfed him, a kind of resignation to inevitable failure before unattainable ideals.



Calculable damage to social relations now comes into the equation, starting with the almost inevitable hatred and animosity to non-believers, apostates, non-conformists, and heretics. Similar outcomes befall anyone identified as sinning or failing in observance. Innocent women become labelled witches and tortured, sexual “others” become mocked and punished, free thinkers become harassed and killed (75–83). The “active religionist” finds ample reasons to exercise the most inhuman methods to deal with non-believers, verging on criminality, and “shocking instances of cruelty.” Similar, counter felicitic methods are applied to non-conformists, those who just don’t follow convention practices (80–82). Like “fictitious entities,” “factitious antipathies” are mischievous and damaging to human accord and civility (84). An early form of labelling theory is adduced which describes how those able to establish the norms, survey, discipline and control “others” (85).

The ‘misapplication of term’ and language generally, is a device that proponents of natural religion develop to deal with the conflicts, tensions and defects that result from the practices of natural religion. But this development of scholastic formulas has left us all, including philosophers, “in a cloud of perplexity and confusion” (87). Religion has delayed the development of a science of morality, distorted discussion and debate, and prevented felicitic progress, labelling any move towards human improvement, as “unnatural” (87–91). Religion often prevents the benefits of the diffusion of knowledge being realised for the majority of humans. We now come to the intellectual crunch, for Natural Religion discourages humans from using, relying upon and hence benefiting from the “intellectual faculties” (93–96). Religion directs humans away from reliance upon their experiences, learning, observation, calculation and judgements into the cul-de-sacs of faith and belief, disabling reason and experience and allowing the disease of ignorance to spread. The germ of the disease is, “extra-experimental belief” (96–8). This belief alone disarms human beings capacity to resist pain and promote pleasure, by denying us the conviction that we can learn from experience and improve the human lot. In a clever allegory, Grote shows that this acts as does a man, or a witch, on trial who is denied a defence based upon evidence and inference (99–102).

Reference to extra experimental data, “completely debars himself from the application of all previous experience,” as does references to “voices in the head” directing serial killers in contemporary court cases, making you “incapacitate.” This belief is born “pregnant with most destructive consequences,” as it leads to “the deprivation of judgement” (104). While waiting for divine foreign aid, humans, deprive themselves of the advantages of self-help, a case the readers would expect to be amply illustrated (105–109). You are in for trouble if you believe God will provide, but it is precisely this belief that gives priests and

the established church their credibility and power. The disjunction of belief from experience has decidedly negative consequences for human well-being. But worse still, priests and rulers are prone to form an unholy alliance, each supporting the others in denying knowledge, information, choice and power to citizens (116–129). Natural religion and the sinister interests are fully aligned, and this leads to the, “Prostration and plunder of the community” by the parties that share the spoil (133, 139–40). This leads us towards the main target of utilitarian political distrust, the sinister interests, in the area of religion, the Established Church. For a detailed analysis of its numerous inefficiencies and failings we have to go to Bentham’s *Church-of-Englandism and Its Catechism Examined*.<sup>49</sup>

Grote’s argument then, is that both the practice of religion and the Established Church erected for its promotion, were a massive waste of human life, opportunity, resources, energy, time and reason, and the causes of much pain, loss and temporal unhappiness. The few benefits that religion and the church provide can be provided better and more effectively by secular means such as education and legal reforms. So the Church of England would better be disestablished and religion removed from the syllabus of schools and from all contracts to public office. From what we know we can deduce that George Grote was a psycho-materialist in the fashion of his friend Alexander Bain, who considered that all thoughts, understandings, beliefs and reasoning could be reduced to material forces and processes.<sup>50</sup> Just as the Myths, Divinities and Temples of Ancient Greece provided dubious foundations to its Polis and people, so for Christianity and the Churches provide dubious, ineffective and dangerously defective foundations for Britain and its Empire.

Perhaps the Natural Religion, portrayed in the *Analysis* had moved beyond the sights and range of Grote’s polemic, by the time of its second edition in 1866. Certainly, Frederick D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, John Grote, Hare, Hort, Lightfoot, Westcott and the other Broad Church Anglicans, plus the non conformists, Christian socialists and other philanthropic Christian groups who favoured reform, would not have relied, as do Grote’s opponents, on fear, hell fire and damnation as intellectual and theological drivers. We may also note that many elements of the church in Britain, such as the Non Conformists and Salvationists, were disassociated from the Established church and the

49 Jeremy Bentham, *Church-of-Englandism and Its Catechism Examined: The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. James Crimmins and Catherine Fuller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011).

50 Bain, *Senses and Intellect; Emotions and Will; On the Study of Character*.

sinister interests by 1822. Nevertheless, the *Analysis* was a brave, forthright, penetrating and effective attack on the providential claims made at the time for religion and the churches in Britain. While it did not sell widely, and may only have been known to small circles and elites, it had a profound effect on the development of Radicalism and the Utilitarianism in the century. Mill's *Three Essays* bear the hallmark of Grote's *Analysis*, a debt that he paid in his *Autobiography*. Bentham may have protested his displeasure, but he was happy to accept association with what became the iconic Radical critique of religion. Not only does religion as a practice and the church as an institution fail by the criteria of the felicific calculus, but also religion imposed untold and unnecessary pains upon hapless individuals. Not only does religion deny to citizens the real opportunity for earthly utility, by denial of earthly pleasures, imposing guilt, anticipated misery in the future life and encouraging deep enmities; it "corrupts judgement" by depriving individuals of a rational framework for making earthly judgements.<sup>51</sup>

We may argue that Grote's *Analysis* is too one-sided, that on the income side of the balance sheet of costs and benefits, the Churches of the day were substantial contributors. Like Bentham and John Mill later, Grote absolves his responsibility, with the case that these benefits accrue largely to secular agencies in the past and present, and will do so more effectively in the future. Nothing religion provides to human well-being can be ascribed to its beliefs or practices, only to such activities as education and charity, which are better provided from other sources.

Grote was broadly sympathetic to Bentham's approach to religion and the question of dis-establishment, but he was frustrated with his mentors verbosity, perplexing grammar and vocabulary, his failure to publish and to bring appropriate philosophical and ethical forces to the task of defeating their shared enemy. Given the munitions Grote took the opportunity to put them to pointed and immediate purpose for the Radicals cause. Harriet Grote and others have also questioned the singularity of Bentham as the source of Grote's atheism, blaming James Mill and Ricardo more. It would be considerable significance in determining the level of independence of Grote's views if we could date his earliest adhesion to atheism and tie this to his acquaintances to the Radical coterie and not alone to Bentham. It is also relevant to follow up on the work of David Berman, Michael Buckley, Michael Thrower, Priestman and

51 Élie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 291–294.

others on the wider history of atheism in Britain, in the search for alternative sources to Grote's atheism.<sup>52</sup>

As an atheist and a Radical, the main focus of attack for Grote was the machinery and legitimacy of Government and public administration as a whole. If politics could be reduced to a science of utility; and its government a machine for tuning behaviour via felicific manipulations, then the effective removal of non felicific ideas and apparatus, such as Christianity and the Established Church, as levers of influence, would assist the bringing about of beneficial outcomes. Those who argue, like Schofield, that Bentham and Grote's positions were compatible with affiliation to other contemporary forces of disestablishment, such as the Christian Socialists, Quakers, Non-Conformists, Catholics. Free Thinkers miss the key agreement of the Radicals that all religion and all forms of Church influence in the State, for instance in schools and universities, would continue to produce negative benefits. The intention of the Radicals was to remove all of the Churches and all religions from influence in the State, beginning with Dis-Establishment of the Church of England in all of the machinery of the State, for the church to agree to a kind of euthanasia.

George sought to sharpen the Radicals attack on religion and the established church, to get them off the agnostic fence, to force Bentham's hand and make the Radicals cause more effective. He succeeded in only one—he did force Bentham's hand. Many of the utilitarians fence sat on questions around religion in print—even J.S. Mill in his “carefully balanced result of the deliberations of lifetime” leaves many commentators in doubt as to his views in *Theism* and the *Utility of Religion*.<sup>53</sup> In the latter Mill adduces an argument similar to Grote's in the *Analysis*, relating only to the utility of natural religion and not opening the metaphysical questions of existence.<sup>54</sup> But life produced its problems, and during his electoral campaign for Westminster in 1865–6 his hand was forced by repeated question about his religious convictions. Berman argues that Mill descended from the fence, in a logical but quite sophistic manner, which left him with his authenticity intact, and his opponents bemused. But Berman produces a convincing narrative that allows for this lack of transparency with a deeply held conviction against the claims of religion.<sup>55</sup> The key text and moment is in the *Examination of Sir William*

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52 Berman, *A History of Atheism* (London: Routledge, 1988); Michael Buckley, *The Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); James Thrower, *A Short History of Western Atheism* (London: Pemberton, 1971); Martin Priestman, *Romantic Atheism: Poetry and Free Thought 1780–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

53 Mill, *Three Essays*, x.

54 Reader, *John Stuart Mill*, 113.

55 Berman, *History of Atheism*, 235–246.

*Hamilton's Philosophy* of 1865, where he refuses to accept the goodness of a God whose existence does not conform to, "the acknowledged principle of logic and morality."<sup>56</sup> Hiding behind unknowability, the unconditional, the infinite or absolute, was not convincing to a logician like Mill. "I will call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go,"<sup>57</sup> George Grote responded anonymously in a review of the book in the *Westminster Review* of 1st January 1866, advising caution, if not anonymity. Mill, like Grote, kept his focus mainly on the dis-utilities of natural religion and not its truth, arguing that all of its utilities would continue under the benevolent practices of education, authority and public opinion, after its demise.<sup>58</sup> What benefits were not covered could be replicated through the development of a secular Religion of Humanity.<sup>59</sup>

Parliament offered George Grote M.P. the opportunity to apply his atheism, but few cases allow us the materials to judge him.<sup>60</sup> With assistance from Bruce Kinzer I have been able to locate several speeches related to religious themes, but four that are indicative of his attitudes to religious issues, namely, a brief statement in support of a petition dealing with religious oaths, Feb. 28, 1833, Vol. 15 of Hansard, 3rd ser., cols 1292–93; a short speech on the Irish Church Temporalities Bill, June 21, 1833, Vol. 18, cols. 1093–94; presentation of a petition dealing with clerical abuse of non-residence, Feb. 20, 1834, Vol. 21, cols. 560–61; a speech in support of a motion calling for a reduction in "the temporal possessions of the Church of Ireland," May 27, 1834, Vol. 23, cols. 1397–1400 (<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/mr-george-grote/>). The Radicals could be anticipated to signal the dangers of forcing religious oaths when religious opinion was a matter of private not public concern. On the Irish Question they could be expected to oppose any extension of State compulsion on religious observance in Ireland where a minority of Protestants ruled a majority of Catholics. The Radicals in Parliament were keen to highlight and remove any area of Clerical Abuse. On Oaths, Grote delivered a petition from a group labelled, "The Separatists," requesting that they be allowed to share the same exclusions from oath taking as the Quakers. It was illiberal and unjust to force oaths on individuals. This argument appears in the *Analysis*

56 Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1865); Mill, *Autobiography*, 234.

57 Quoted in Berman, *History of Atheism*, 235.

58 Mill, *Three Essays*, 82–87.

59 Mill, *Three Essays*, 109; Reader, *John Stuart Mill*.

60 Thanks to Bruce Kinzer for the identification of George Grote's Speeches to Parliament regarding religious matters.

with the example of the pernicious effects of the demand for subscription to the Thirty Nine Articles of Faith, as a condition of entry to Oxford University given, and the same for Jurors involved in court cases (Grote 1822, 60–64). On the Irish Church Temporalities Bill, Grote argued that while he supported limiting the powers of, “that great Ecclesiastical enormity of Europe,” he was not able to support some of the methods recommended in the Bill. He also worried that a battle might develop between the Lords, with its predominant Church representation, and the House of Commons, that might lead the Lords to amend the few positive elements out of the Bill.

In terms of expression of Radical opinion, by far the most indicative speech was on a Petition from the Parishioners of Allhallows, against the preferment of their vicar to the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury. “The Gentleman was already in the enjoyment of several other benefices, and that he was a non-resident in the parish, a common complaint found in Bentham’s, *Church-of-Englandism*,<sup>61</sup> of incumbencies and offices being used to accrue and status and income without provision of services. The parishioners reported, “so large a portion of the clergy of the Established Church holding a plurality of livings and residing at a distance from them” . . . the vicars, “had but little intercourse with their parishioners, and, consequently, could have no sympathy with their wants, and take no personal interest in their religious welfare.” Grote universalised from the particular, concluding, “The case of the petitioners was not a solitary instance of the existence of the abuse, there being, in various parts of the country, abuses of a similar kind: though he doubted very much, whether it were possible to find one of greater hardship than the case of the petitioners.” Sir John Wrottersley replying noted in support, “that 3,687 incumbents of livings who were non-resident. Of these, 1,139 had 3001 a-year and upwards, and 2,548 had a yearly salary under 3001.” He concluded, “If some measure were not introduced to abolish pluralities, and to enforce the residence of the clergy, he was convinced that that beautiful fabric, the Established Church, would soon be destroyed.” This Speech echoes the argument that the Established Church was a vehicle for “prostration and plunder of the community,” as found set out in the *Analysis* (Grote 1822, 133, 139–140).

On 30th April 1834, Grote spoke briefly to oppose the Observance of the Sabbath Bill, arguing that compulsory church attendance, “. . . if carried into a law, would be nothing more or less than a sentence of imprisonment upon the working classes of society upon the Sabbath.” The Church of Ireland Bill of 1834 did attract a more detailed comment in support of Ward’s proposal. His and Grote’s stated aim was not to reduce the efficiency of the Protestant

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61 Bentham, *Church-of-Englandism*.

Church in Ireland in regard to its ecumenical duties, but to, “to assail the immoderate endowments of that Church” that fell unjustly upon poor Catholics. That a majority, who were Catholics, had to pay their own priests, support their own churches, receive a paltry benefice while pay excessive tithes to a Protestant Church caring for a small minority of Irish citizens, was a waste, an injustice and brought shame to Britain and her Empire. Worse still this iniquity stoked old religious divisions and hatred going back to the seventeenth century invasions of Ireland, which in turn stoked nationalism, the Catholic Church being the emblem and totem of Irish independence movements. For these reasons there must be a reigning in of “the great Protestant Establishment in Ireland.” Ward asks the rhetorical question, whether tithes were, and “The last drop in the full glass of her sufferings”? The hon. member for Kildare (Mr. More O’Ferrall) said, that—“he never paid tithes without feeling himself degraded; he regarded it as a tribute paid by the conquered to the conquerors.” Ward related this to non-residency, “Who can wonder that the very magnitude of the Establishment, and the paucity of the duties attached to the different livings, should have rendered the Irish clergy peculiarly open to those attacks, on the score of non-residence, and neglect, which constitute one of the most serious charges against them?”

This proposal, the principle behind it, the method of highlighting particular abuses to illustrate general abuses, was informed by, and compatible with, the *Analysis and Church-of-Englandism* (Grote 1822, 139–140). In his speech Grote focuses on, “the temporalities” issue, natural religion not spiritual or theological matters. Reminding the Commons that it had the power and authority to act in the face of injustice and waste, he makes contrast with the similar case of Scotland where Parliament had acted to redress Established Church privileges. But he feared that the government and the church leaders had such a common interest in plundering the poor, that nothing would be reformed. In the *Analysis* he predicted such an outcome, “Prostration and plunder of the community is indeed the common end of both. The only point upon which there can be any dissension, is about the partition of the spoil” (140).

One incident in George Grote’s life managed to elude the editorial hand of Harriet on Grote. A very private and personal correspondence reveals his attitude to the theory and practice of religion, in his efforts to counsel and advise his young sister in law, Frances Lewin, on withholding adherence to the idea of God, and the offer of comfort in those circumstances.<sup>62</sup> For this event to have occurred this woman had to have doubts, to be in the knowledge that George Grote had trod that path towards atheism, be confident that he could and

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62 UCL Add. ms. 266.



would provide guidance, and to put ones doubts in writing. Frances also had confidence that she would receive appropriate advice, and the self-confidence to act upon this advice. These conditions support the attribution of activist atheist to George Grote within his family and cohort.

The two correspondents build rapport and confidence in early letters around Frances intellectual development before the topic of religious doubt and subscription arises. The Lewin family frequently alluded to religious tropes in their letters, and seemed conventional in their views, with the exclusion of Harriet.<sup>63</sup> But Frances reveals her doubts and Grote responds clearly and definitively on 23rd February 1823. "[T]here cannot be a benevolent God who suffers evil and pain to exist. And if there be a God of any other character, who does not design the happiness of mankind, then all I can say is, that I shall prefer serving & benefiting my fellow-men & take the risk of his displeasure. But all these superstitions are really altogether a fictitious basis: There is exactly as much reason to believe that there are ghosts, as that there is a God; indeed there is not so much evidence for the latter, inasmuch as his reputed attributes are thoroughly incompatible & contradictory."<sup>64</sup> He advises that new associations will replace the pain felt by withdrawal of faith, and "the lost pleasures will cease to plague you as or ever occur to you."<sup>65</sup> While inconclusive by itself, a letter of 1885 from Frances, now Madame von Koch, to her brother Colonel Thomas H. Lewin, suggests no lasting effect of the correspondence and counselling.<sup>66</sup> Writing of the Colonel's bravery, surviving mutinies, marches and battles in India, recorded in his autobiographical, *A Fly on the Wheel*, and his subsequent poor treatment by the Government, she weaves God's narrative onto his own, commenting that she saw in it all, "God's protecting love and fatherly care was with you," that she, "perceives traces of the original revelation of God in those his creatures" (the rebels), that she acknowledges the right of the, "Almighty to call you to a brave and early death. . . . But I adored God afresh for his preservation of you." The dominant religious form of life was too much for Frances to resist, or for Grote to overcome with logic. A form of life does not succumb to logic, knowing "of" cannot

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63 Thomas Herbert Lewin, *The Lewin Papers: the Correspondence and Diaries of an English Family, 1756–1884* (London: Archibald Constable, 1909), online at Cornell University Library.

64 Grote quoted in Berman, *History of Atheism*, 193.

65 William Calder and Stephen Trzaskoma, eds., *George Grote Reconsidered* (Hilesheim: Weidmann, 1996), 6–7.

66 Lewin, *Lewin Papers*, letter 357.

be disintegrated by knowing “about” something. Frances did what most citizens do, just subscribe and practice, with the attendant feeling that, if pressed, the case wouldn’t stand up to rational nor scientific scrutiny.

Contemporary reviewers of Grote’s *Histories*, and his obituarists, differ slightly on how they describe Grote’s attitudes to religion.<sup>67</sup> McIlwraith judges, “that Grote was not religious in the generally acceptance of the term,” others label him a “free thinker,” “independent,” and so on.<sup>68</sup> John Vaio is clear that Grote is a “resolute atheist” who managed to make Bentham’s pig’s ear of a case into a silk purse.<sup>69</sup> Davies noted ‘antipathy’ in Grote’s attitude to the church, which he blamed on James Mill’s early influence.<sup>70</sup> The *Christian Observer* blamed Mr Charles Cameron for leading Grote astray on religion, ‘beyond’ the limits of orthodoxy.<sup>71</sup> John Owen in the *Theological Review*, notes non attendance at Church but adds, that he supported a, “Christianity which transcends its name . . . a self-denying discharge of duties of man,” rather an odd attribution to a man committed to selfishness embedded in human nature.<sup>72</sup>

John Grote seemed to have suffered less from this atmosphere and parental reversal of roles than his brother George, for whereas the latter was prevented by his father from going to university and was directly steered into the family business, young John was actually encouraged by his mother both towards university and the church. Whereas George had been sent to Charterhouse, a Mr Fletcher Kent privately educated John at home and on the death of his father in 1830 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge under the tutorship of John Philips Higman author of a text on *Differential and Integral Calculus*.<sup>73</sup> Whereas George Grote’s escape plan with his proposal to marry Harriet Lewin

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- 67 Kyriakos Demetriou, ed., *Reception of Grote in American and British Biographical Essays* (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004); Demetriou, ed., *Classics in the Nineteenth Century: Responses to George Grote*, 4 vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004).
  - 68 William McIlwraith, *The Life and Writings of George Grote: An Essay* (Wolverhampton: Bourford and Newall, 1884), 6–8.
  - 69 J. Vaio, “Biography of George Grote 17th November 1794–18th June, 1871,” in *Classical Scholarship: A Biographical Encyclopaedia*, ed. William Ward, William Briggs and William Calder (New York: Garland, 1990), 119–126.
  - 70 J. Davies, “Review of the Life of George Grote,” *Contemporary Review*, 22, in Demetriou, *Classics in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2, 394.
  - 71 Anon., “Review of the Life of George Grote,” *Christian Observer*, in Demetriou, *Classics in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2, 635.
  - 72 John Owen, “Review of Mrs Grote’s *Personal Life of George Grote*,” *Theological Review* 10 (1873): 503–23, in Demetriou, *Classics in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 4, 522.
  - 73 J.P. Higman, *A Syllabus of the differential and integral calculus* (Cambridge: Harwood & Hall, 1826).

was met with outright opposition, forcing migration to London, John's emigration to Cambridge was encouraged. Only John's younger brother Francis followed into the universities, the rest of the sons typically dividing themselves between the Civil Service in India, commissions in the army and navy and entry into the family banking business. The family remained close, meeting regularly to induct new initiates into what the children called a "Grotery." John enjoyed the attention that goes with being a younger son and with his older brother Joseph, who ran the bank in Newcastle upon Tyne, and with George he shared the rejuvenation of fostering the children of their brother Andrew who had died in 1833 in India. John and George remained close friends all their lives despite fundamental philosophical differences as both John's *Journal*, Alice Mayor's *Chronicle*, and Alexander Bain letters and other sources confirm.<sup>74</sup>

Closer comparisons reveal a similar upright, rather rigid posture and style. Both enjoyed Classics and benefited from a liberal education in the fullest sense. Both moved in elite intellectual circles, located in competing elite metropolitan spaces of London and Cambridge, were comfortable in any social situation, and attracted respect, disciples and honours. Their common upbringing left them both damaged by their mothers austere upbringing, but they sought remedy in different directions. John widened his idea of religion, broadened his theological outlook, indulged in German critical theology, became a vicar and adopted a Broad Church liberal theology and charitable religious practice. George narrowed his views of religion, reduced it to a strict formula descending from a belief in extra-experimental data, indulged in the same German thought, but adopted an atheistic response. John moved within the circle of the Cambridge Network, that eulogised Coleridge, Julius Hare, F.D. Maurice, and William Whewell, while George moved amongst their most pronounced opponents, the London based Philosophical Radicals. John formulated a novel version of indigenous English idealism, while George helped foster a radical form of hedonism. Both published widely, George more on history and classics, John focusing on philosophy and ethics. John was by far the most knowledgeable and versed philosopher with no intention to found a school or enter politics, while George was the historian committed to public action and change. John remained an active liberal college reformer and parochial vicar, while George became an MP standing for the Radicals, founder of institutions like University College, London and the British Museum. John remained celibate while George married.

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74 John Grote, *Remarks on a Pamphlet by Mr Shilleto Entitled 'Thucydides or Grote'* (Cambridge: Deighton, Macmillan & Co., 1851), John Grote "Journal," Mayor C12/59, 1; Bain 1904, 253–6, 258; Mayor B24/59; Alice Mayor; *Chronicles*, "John Grote," 4–6; Mayor C12/57.

George's popularity, is measured in numerical copies of publications sold, of fame measured by honours, and in influence, measured by role in government, on political, literary and educational reform. However, it would be wrong to believe that the younger brother lived in George's shadow. Both were planets, even stars in their own firmaments, celebrities, but on different, though very significant stages. The brothers inhabited two very different and competing worlds, and made notable contributions to them. Intellectually the differences were immense: John was an idealist within the Liberal Anglican school of Vichean historiography, while George was an empiricist and utilitarian, versed in Whig history. The younger brother understood that we live in an historical house that is best renovated but maintained, while the elder sought radical demolition and rebuilding. John considered religion to be one part, one voice in a wider form of life or tradition, a voice worth keeping in conversation with the newer voices of science, professionalism and commerce, while George advocated euthanasia for religion and the Established Church. John used the pulpit and church to espouse social and charitable reform, while George used the pen and Parliament to a radical disestablishment agenda. John wrote a brilliant defence of the very educational reforms that Georges friend, Robert Lowe, was undermining in Parliament.<sup>75</sup> John inhabited and promoted an established university dominated by Anglicans, while George busied himself founding a non-denominational University College in London. John won the Knightbridge Chair of Philosophy in Cambridge, while George founded and funded and managed a secular Grote Chair in Philosophy in London. John was a traditionalist, while George was a committed rationalist. Politically, John was a liberal reformer in the new liberal mould while George was a Radical who wished to break the established mould. John considered habits and traditions to be invaluable embodiments and reservoirs of wisdom, morality and example, while for George they were obstacles, bastions of the sinister interests and the Establishment, best undermined and eradicated. John venerated Aristotle, and attacked the scurrilous methods of the contemporary Sophist reviewing in the Cambridge *Saturday Review*, while George was one of the most effective Sophists in Britain, especially within the *London and Westminster Review*.<sup>76</sup> John defended the *New Educational Code* in 1862 from being undermined by Robert Lowe, a friend and compatriot of George.<sup>77</sup> John found the ideals and "aspiringness" in religion enlivening, a source for reform and optimistic, its

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75 John Grote, *A Few Words on the New Education Code* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell & Co., 1862), 1–48.

76 John Grote, *A Few Words of Criticism a propos of the Saturday Review of April 20, 1861, Upon Dr. Whewell's Platonic Dialogues for English Readers* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1861), 1–56.

77 John Grote, *A Few Words on the New Education Code*.

ideals worth exploring, while George found its existence and practices dampening and demeaning, and its ideals retrogressive to human progress. But John came to his brother's rescue when attacked by a venomous Tory Cambridge classicist hell bent on discrediting George as he did later for William Whewell when attacked by the *Saturday Review*.<sup>78</sup> In his *Exploratio* and *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy*, John defended his brother's psycho physiology and hedonism from the criticisms he levelled at John Stuart Mill, a strategy applauded by Bain.<sup>79</sup>

What this comparison of two brothers allows is a reflection on contemporary interpretative theory and methods. Class difference cannot explain the contrasts between brothers. Nor can it be exposure to religious influence, one that was shared but led to violently different reactions, rejection versus reform. Nor can it be national influence, nor gender that explains the dichotomy. What best explains the comparisons and contrasts, is family, friendship and above all networks. Immersion in the London circle, the Debating Society, the Breakfast Meetings of the Radicals at the Grote Bank, cooperation on planning and managing the Radicals political agenda, cooperation on editing each other's publications and managing their Journal, committee meetings at the University, British Museum and Library, the constant round of social gatherings shaped George Grote's more effectively than any other factor. Entering the portals of Trinity College, Cambridge, immersion in preparation for the Tripos, the daily round of Chapel, breakfast, tutorials, library, lunch, writing, dinner, cards, breakfasts at Byron's Pool, the "Granchester Grind" walks, vacation trips with tutors and friends to the Lakes, vacation reading, examinations, preparation for religious orders and fellowship examinations, appointments, prizes, administration of Tripos in Examination Boards, dinners, clubs, societies, visiting parishioners, writing sermons, and so much more, made John the man he was. Networks and form of life, tells us most about intellectual development of individuals and elites in Britain in the Victorian period, but real active social networks, not our contemporary vapid, virtual, private equivalents.

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78 John Grote, *Remarks on a Pamphlet*; John Grote, *A Few Words of Criticism a propos of the Saturday Review*; Chris Stray, "Thucydides or Grote?," *Classical Disputes and Disputed Classics in Nineteenth-Century Cambridge*, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 127 (1997): 363–371.

79 J. Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica: Rough Notes on Modern Intellectual Science*, Part I. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1865); 1870; *Exploratio Philosophica*, Part II. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900); Alexander Bain, "John Stuart Mill (IV)," *Mind* (1880), 92; Bain, *J.S. Mill: A Criticism with Personal Recollections* (London: Longmans, Green, 1882), 115; Gibbins, *John Grote*, 1998.

But did their different views on religion impact upon their thoughts and their lives? Antipathy to religion, engendered by oppressive maternal circumstances, was an early feeling to George Grote, and it led him to explore alternative understandings of life. Through friends this led to the James Mill and the other Radicals whose opposition to the established church, suspicion of religion led him variously to explore freethinking, agnosticism and finally, atheism. For John, it was an innate personal conviction, in the face of his mothers naïve belief system, that the world could be explored and known intellectually, that led him to Cambridge and ultimately, philosophy. John created an original and personal idealist philosophy that allowed him to both explore freely, never limiting his scope, and yet to accept religion defined in the broadest sense of the term and in his own manner. Religion was a factor, but not the main factor explaining the trajectories of these two influential members of the English intellectual elite. Family, friendships, networks, and the daily calendar, provided stimulus, but a shared allegiance to knowing, the inheritance of the western intellectual tradition and philosophy, did the work.

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## Bentham, Mill, Grote, and *An Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*

Catherine Fuller†

This paper investigates the production of *An Analysis of the influence of natural religion on the temporal happiness of mankind*, first published in 1822 by George Grote, from Bentham's manuscripts on the utility of religion. The paper undertakes a preliminary comparison between the manuscripts and the book. The basis of this comparison also includes Grote's essay on Magic, the influence of James Mill, and Bentham's reaction to the book. It will be argued that Bentham and Grote had different agenda, and produced different texts, and that to regard Bentham as the author of *An Analysis of the influence of natural religion* is misleading.<sup>1</sup>

Denied the possibility of a university education by his father's insistence that he worked in the family bank, George Grote sought all possibilities of education and debate through friendship, and in 1819 met James Mill.<sup>2</sup> Grote soon came under Mill's influence, and according to Harriet, Grote's wife, "there was little difference in point of opinion between them."<sup>3</sup>

Grote's early essay on Magic, completed by Christmas 1820,<sup>4</sup> was a thinly-disguised attack on religion. Mill recommended Grote and the essay to the editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and recommended Grote to Bentham as an editor of his writings on the utility of religion.<sup>5</sup> After two meetings at dinner with Grote in August and November 1821, Bentham sent four parcels

1 A version of this paper was given at the ISUS Conference held in San Francisco in September 2008.

2 George Grote (1794–1871) later became a member of the Utilitarian Society run by John Stuart Mill, and the Political Economy Club: he had joined the community which was to become the Philosophic Radicals.

3 Harriet Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote* (London: John Murray, 1873), 22. For an example of the closeness of the thought of Mill and Grote in their private writings, see Postscript below.

4 "Essay on Magick," BL Add. MS. 29,531, ff. 1–65, 67–88v, dated, by Harriet Grote, Christmas 1820.

5 In January 1821.

of manuscripts to Grote at his home above the family bank in Threadneedle Street.<sup>6</sup> The last parcel was sent on 18 December 1821. Grote returned all the manuscripts to Bentham on 5 November 1822, and on the same day Richard Carlile the publisher sent Bentham a copy of the printed work, which it had taken Grote under a year to complete.<sup>7</sup>

# 1

What did Bentham send to Grote? Over 1,500 manuscripts. These represented all his work on the utility of religion—from the earliest paragraph, dated 10 July 1807, headed: “Ch. 1. Utility of Religion a subject little as yet examined,”<sup>8</sup> which was the introduction to a modest two-part work, to his most recent thoughts of November 1821<sup>9</sup> for a much larger eight-part work.<sup>10</sup> In these

6 Colls's Journal, BL Add. MS. 33,563, ff. 92–4. We can tell from the record kept by Colls, Bentham's amanuensis, how many and when the manuscripts were sent to Grote. The manuscripts now in the British Library are still bound in the same parcels, among which is Grote's plan, probably for second part of his work, written on the back of a cover sheet for a letter dated 3 December 1821; BL Add. MS. 29,807, f. 195.

7 Colls's Journal, BL Add. MS. 33,563, f. 112.

8 Bentham continued: “While meditating on the subject of religion, and in particular on the influence which the notions presented by that term have or have been supposed to have on the welfare of mankind during the present life, it has frequently occurred to me, that after so much as has been said on both sides on the question respecting truth . . . yet the question concerning their utility with reference to the present life, together with reference to a life to come, has never yet been placed in a full and satisfactory point of view.” See BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 313, written at Barrow Hill House, Oxted, Surrey. While at Ford Abbey, Bentham *did* address the question of truth, see below.

9 Bentham wrote on the utility of religion for the last time on 30 September 1830, “Jug.Util.,” UC [Bentham Papers] cxxxviii. 162–5, 166.

10 There are a number of plans for the eight-part work, with slight variations in order and text. According to a plan dated 3 and 10 March 1821 (BL Add. MS. 29,807, ff. 157–8), the final work was designed to be as follows:

- I. On the usefulness of Natural Religion, Verity not considered.
- II. On the usefulness of Natural Religion, apparent Verity considered.
- III. On the usefulness of Revealed Religion at large, apparent verity considered.
- IV. On the usefulness of the Religion of Jesus, its apparent verity considered in the general point of view.
- V. On the usefulness of Religion of Jesus, Verity apart or not considered.
- VI. Religion of Jesus considered under the form given to it by Political Establishments.
- VII. Jesus Displayed: or the True History of Jesus (as deduced from a critical examination of the documents).

manuscripts Bentham addressed a mixture of current and traditional debates on religion. He used his own terms of reference and his own developing ideas, and he focussed on the irrelevance of religious belief, and the relevance of the principle of utility to human concerns. During the course of the work Bentham put forward a rationale for a secular state<sup>11</sup> and a secular morality<sup>12</sup> in accordance with his principle of utility. However, both the proposed title, “The Usefulness of Religion to the present life examined,” and the text itself stop short of an insistence on the replacement of religion with the principle of utility, and Bentham intended this to be so. His writings on religion reveal that he had a fear of prosecution, and of causing offence, for above all he wished to preserve the integrity of his other works.<sup>13</sup>

The earliest drafts of 1810 on the utility of religion reveal Bentham’s use of personal psychology—the general constitution of human nature—as the organizing factor, based on terms of reference and ideas outlined earlier in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.<sup>14</sup> Within a year Bentham had abandoned the scheme, though not the substance, and reorganized his material around the concepts of Reason and Revelation,<sup>15</sup> which finally, in 1819, became Natural and Revealed Religion, categories commonly used by many other commentators at the time.<sup>16</sup>

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VIII. National History of the Jews to the time of Jesus.”

See also, BL Add. MS. 29,807, f. 173v and ff. 217–18, 8 January 1820.

- 11 Bentham wrote: “Had the discourse of Jesus taken for its object the felicity of mankind during the present life, and in the pursuit of that object had his precepts been under the guidance of that degree of intelligence and wisdom of which human reason without any assistance from religion—without any assistance supernaturally given by and received from God—is susceptible, the following or thereabouts is the course he would have pursued.” He would have codified the different species of transgression under the title of crimes and misdemeanours. But, as far as Bentham was concerned, Jesus was neither a utilitarian nor a codifier of a penal code. BL Add. MS. 29,807, f. 58, 2 October 1811.

- 12 See notes 48 and 49 below.

- 13 BL Add. MS. 29,807, ff. 67–92, 31 August 1811; 29,806, ff. 305, 423, 28 September 1815; 29,809, ff. 352–3, 26 April 1819; 29,807, f. 158, 12 March 1821.

- 14 Principally the efficacy of human sanctions, the inefficacy of religious sanctions, and the principles of asceticism and antipathy. See Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart (London: The Athlone Press, 1970). The work was printed in 1780, and published in 1789. Hereafter IPML.

- 15 See also BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 357, 25 April 1815.

- 16 BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 289, 16 February 1819; 29,809, f. 374, 1 May 1819; 29,809, f. 21, 21 March 1821.

Perhaps Bentham resisted the opposing categories of Natural and Revealed Religion, because the two were harder to keep distinct than reason and revelation. See BL Add. MS.

By the end of 1811 Bentham envisaged a four-part work, and, in material eventually placed in Part I, "On the Usefulness of Religion at large, verity apart," and Part II, "On the Usefulness of Natural Religion, verity considered," Bentham continued to explore the uselessness and perniciousness of the religious sanction, and began to examine the attributes of God. Without Revelation, expectation of punishment or reward might be formed from our knowledge of the attributes of God such as Benevolence, Justice, Wisdom, etc.<sup>17</sup> Bentham wrote: "From our experience of the world, God is more malevolent than benevolent." In fact "if what is called God's justice does not bear benevolence in the same ratio as man's justice, tyranny is its proper name."<sup>18</sup> Disputes over the attributes of God had been commonplace in writings on religion for centuries, but Bentham provided the test of utility against which to judge God. God is not benevolent, but the principle of utility is, based on benevolence through justice.

For Bentham the influence of revealed religion was mischievous, and he began to list these mischiefs in Part V, "On the Usefulness of Religion of Jesus, verity apart." Some of the mischiefs Bentham found through the principle of asceticism which privileges pain over pleasure, and the principle of antipathy which encourages hatred of those who subscribe to different religious beliefs and practices—both first identified in IPML; other mischiefs were found in the traditions and customs of the church which had accrued

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29,807, f. 148, 14 October 1821: "to extricate them from this entanglement, considerable care will be necessary."

17 At the end of his exploration of God's attributes Bentham resolved: "not to wander long in the labyrinth of attributes," but he was unable to keep to his resolution, and in fact wandered in the labyrinth for years. See BL Add. MS. 28,809, ff. 112–28, 268–76, 23 and 27 August 1811; BL Add. MS. 29,809, ff. 280–5, 29 April 1819; 29,809, ff. 280–8, 29 April 1821; 29,809, f. 330, 19 February 1821. And "Here then we have a sample & a proof of this supposed compound of superhuman wisdom, put into action by superhuman benevolence. God makes men for the accomplishment of a certain purpose: when made it turns out that they are not fit for the purpose & that the purpose never is accomplished. Seeing this he falls into a passion, he punishes them for the disappointment produced by his not having been willing or not having been able—this all-powerful & all wise being to provide for the accomplishment of his own designs. Being angry he is thereby in a state of sufferance: he looks out for something to diminish this sufferance: & the only thing he can find capable of contributing to this effect is the prospect of the misery of these beings that accordingly he has made for the pleasure of seeing them miserable." BL Add. MS. 29,807, f. 22, 5 September 1821.

18 BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 270, 28 August 1811.

through the centuries; and some in the Sermon on the Mount. In 1819, he reorganized the list into three categories:<sup>19</sup> Mischiefs applying to man's feelings, for example, producing unassuageable terrors by threats of the torments of hell; To man's intellect, for example, acknowledging as true doctrines such as original sin for which God continually punishes mankind (Bentham wrote: original sin "Original nonsense. Original disobedience to precepts never delivered"); and To man as a member of society, for example, encouraging disinterestedness and idleness: "consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not."<sup>20</sup>

In 1811 two further parts were projected, though little worked upon in these manuscripts: 1. on the influence of the established church, and 2. on how to reduce the influence of the Church to a minimum. Bentham wrote brief plans for measures on freedom of speech and worship. Freedom, of religious beliefs and personal tastes, is a thread which runs through Bentham's writings on religion.

The eight-part division of the text began to take shape while Bentham stayed at Ford Abbey in Dorset from 1814 to 1818.<sup>21</sup> Putting utility to one side, he looked now at the truth of religion, under two headings of Verity Apart (presuming for the purpose of argument religion to be true), and Supposed Verity Considered (considering the truth of religion), as two subsidiary principles around which to arrange his text.<sup>22</sup> Bentham acknowledged transcendent truth neither in the matter of religion, nor in the matter of the idea of the sacred, since he acknowledged no transcendent truths whatever, and since the complex phenomena

19 BL Add. MS. 29,806, ff. 519–20v, 18 April 1819. Bentham reworked and wrote new material on religion at this time. I think he may have planned to publish something in America, for on 29 November 1819 Aaron Burr wrote to Bentham: "If you will send me your Work on Religion, I will publish it without delay and under any restrictions which you may impose." See Letter 2577, *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. 9, ed. S. Conway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 370.

20 The Church Fathers from Augustine onwards and philosophers had found the morality taught in the New Testament and the Sermon on the Mount in particular very demanding, (e.g. give away all possessions, and do no evil that good may come, termed by Bentham anarchical precepts), and had looked to Greek philosophy as a basis for moral thinking.

21 At Ford Abbey he also worked on *Church-of-Englandism* and *Not Paul, but Jesus*.

22 Each manuscript carries some indication of the section into which it should be placed. Under the acerbic headings "apparent verity considered," or "supposed verity considered," Bentham examined Verity, often under the abbreviated general heading of Jug. True. He headed other manuscripts on Natural and Revealed Religion, Without Revelation and Under Revelation, often abbreviated to sine rev and sub rev. The general title of the whole work was abbreviated to Jug. Util. For the use and significance of Jug. See below.



of the metaphysical aspects of religion simply did not interest him. He did not accept the possibility of any nuance of spiritual apprehension of divine truths beyond the experience of the senses. For Bentham there was no such thing as the verity of religion, only the *persuasion* of its verity, and the consequent *expectations* of supernatural punishments and rewards. For Bentham truth or verity was a matter of evidence:<sup>23</sup> Natural Religion provided circumstantial evidence which was based on groundless suppositions or assumptions; and Revealed Religion provided direct evidence which on inspection turned out to be groundless and/or untrustworthy.<sup>24</sup>

In Part III, “On the Usefulness of Revealed Religion at large, verity considered,”<sup>25</sup> to examine the supposed verity of religion, Bentham looked generally at the accounts of miracles and prophecies in the texts of revealed religions (Abrahamic religions).<sup>26</sup> For the same Part he also redrafted sections from an essay on the current debate on miracles, credulity, and probability,<sup>27</sup> initially proposed for his work on evidence.<sup>28</sup> The essay was begun in 1804 on Hume’s *Essay on Miracles*, and included a critique of Price’s theory of the probability of improbable things.<sup>29</sup> For IV, “On the Usefulness of the Religion of Jesus, verity considered in the general point of view,” Bentham then exposed the supposed verity of the Religion of Jesus, through the discordancy, and

23 Bentham had stated this in the 1770s. Bentham, *A Comment on the Commentaries and A Fragment on Government*, ed. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart (London: The Athlone Press, 1977), 26: “The question concerning the truth of the sacred history in general is a very complicated and difficult question of evidence . . .”

24 See, for example, BL Add. ms. 29,806, f. 275, 25 January 1814; 29,806, ff. 365–9, 19 January 1815; 29,807, f. 152, 2 March 1821. The majority of the manuscripts at BL Add. ms. 29,806 are on the topic of the truth of religion, headed Jug True.

25 See BL Add. ms. 29,806, ff. 23–5, 242–9, 365–72, 427–8, 474–89, 261–75, all written in January 1814; BL Add. ms. 29,809, ff. 357–61, 25 April 1815.

26 For the Abrahamic religions see, for example, BL Add. ms. 29,806, f. 395, July 1815; BL Add. ms. 29,806, f. 247, 27 March 1814; BL Add. ms. 29,809, f. 15, 12 March 1821.

27 See D. Wootton, “Hume’s ‘Of Miracles’: Probability and Irreligion,” in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. M.A. Stewart (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

28 But in 1811 he wrote “Omitt out of evidence, this being polemical, and anti-juggernaut post off to the anonym work,” i.e. anonym: disregard of law, disregard of divine law. BL Add. ms. 29,806, f. 174.

29 The work was entitled Antimir: i.e. against wonder-works. See BL Add. ms. 29,806, ff. 142–9, November 1806; ff. 174–7, December 1808; ff. 70–1, January 1809; ff. 66–9, 172, 158–63, November 1811; ff. 151–3, November 1812; ff. 119–40, November 1813; and specifically intended for religious writings, 29,807, ff. 120–5, March 1819.

therefore lack of truth, in the received accounts of the miracles of Jesus in the New Testament, and the 'disfulfillment' of his predictions.<sup>30</sup>

Within a large wrapper containing 392 manuscripts<sup>31</sup> is work for Part VI, "Jesus Displayed: or the History of Jesus as deduced from a critical examination of the documents." Here Bentham examined a subject explored by German Enlightenment thinkers<sup>32</sup>—Jesus' own temporal ambition.<sup>33</sup> "[Jesus'] sole purpose" Bentham wrote, "was to raise up a temporal sovereignty for himself in that country at that time; and to this end every discourse as well as every act will, upon examination . . . be . . . found to be directed."<sup>34</sup> But as hope of success faded, a spiritual rather than a temporal kingdom was invented. For Bentham, the precepts in the Sermon on the Mount, from which he had earlier identified

30 See UC cxxxviii: 1–139, dated March to September 1815. Most of the work Bentham completed on this topic, entitled "Comparative Study of Accounts of the Life of Jesus in the Gospels," is stored at UCL and so may not have been sent to Grote. Bentham composed tabulations of Jesus' prophecies and miracles, categorized into type: cures, dispossessions, sea miracles, vegetation destroyed, and cures divided again into blindness, leprosy, palsy, fever, bedriddenness etc.

31 BL Add. MS. 29,806, f. 8, n.d.; ff. 008–118, 301–495.

32 The German deist, Herman Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), is generally regarded as having first proposed these ideas, which remained as notes only until his work was published posthumously and anonymously by one of his followers, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in 1774 and 1777. The ideas certainly had currency among scholars in Germany and in England when Bentham was writing. For example: Herbert Marsh (1757–1839), biblical scholar, Bishop of Llandaff 1816–19, Bishop of Peterborough from 1819; Thomas Beddoes (1760–1808), chemist and physician; and the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834). See E.S. Shaffer, *'Kubla Khan' and 'The Fall of Jerusalem': The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature, 1770–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Goethe left among his unpublished notes the statement: "The Christian religion was an intended political revolution, which, after failing, subsequently became an ethical one." All three, Bentham, Reimarus, and Goethe, left their thoughts in unpublished manuscripts, and the subject was not really tackled openly until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

33 BL Add. MS. 29,806, f. 332, 8 August 1815. See also within Bentham's critique of the Lord's Prayer—"Thy Kingdom Come: The Kingdom described by all prophets as temporal was found to be spiritual," BL Add. MS. 29,808, f. 153, 19 September 1811.

34 BL Add. MS. 29,806, f. 302, March 1815. Bentham surmised that the plan originated with Zachariah, father of John the Baptist. As a priest, Zachariah, who was privy to the secrets of government, probably intended his own son to lead the Jews, not John's cousin Jesus, the son of a carpenter, but Jesus' eloquence and charisma made him a better candidate for the task.

many Mischiefs, now became evidence of this mission.<sup>35</sup> Bentham held that for the individual and the purpose of the moment all these precepts were perfectly well adapted, but for “the universally and perpetually necessary purposes of human society, these precepts were destructive.”<sup>36</sup>

From time to time Bentham added to these manuscripts ideas he had developed first elsewhere. In July 1815, Bentham examined aspects of religion using his theory of fictitious entities, developed in his work on language and logic undertaken ten months earlier.<sup>37</sup> He had identified fictitious entities as things that were spoken of as if real but were not, and developed interpretative processes (phraseoplerosis and paraphrasis), used notably with the terms such as duty and rights, to give such words “a determinate meaning fit for discourse.” Using his theory of fictitious entities Bentham found, for example, that words such as God and soul could be identified as inferential real entities, or if that failed to persuade, non-entities.<sup>38</sup> Bentham now revised a chapter on “Life after death—its natural improbability,” and asked a series of questions designed to embarrass the proponents of resurrection: After death, what happens to the mind or soul,<sup>39</sup> in what state will the mind be preserved? as it was in old age at the point of death, or in youth?<sup>40</sup> Bentham had already decided on the only sensible answer: the mind or soul is a cluster of fictitious entities—mental faculties such as perception, memory, judgment, etc.<sup>41</sup>—existing only through the medium of a living body. After death we, and our soul, cease to be. This discussion became part of Part II, “On the Usefulness of Natural Religion, verity considered.”<sup>42</sup>

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35 “These precepts . . . what had they for their object? The accomplishment of his own project of temporal ambition—that and nothing else.” BL Add. MS. 29,807, f. 44, 17 July 1815.

36 BL Add. MS. 29,807, f. 45, 17 July 1815.

37 UC cii. 9, 11, 15, 25–27 September 1814.

38 UC cii. 11, 26–7 September 1814.

39 Bentham uses the word soul to mean qualities of the mind, rather than the immortal spirit of man, in line with contemporary usage. (See, for example, Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* [London, first published 1755]).

40 And if a degree of intelligence is the criterion for resurrection, then should some animals be resurrected? BL Add. MS. 29,809, ff. 154–62, 15 July 1815; *ibid.*, 29,809, ff. 384–91, 24 February 1819.

41 BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 162, 21 July 1815.

42 In a draft introduction, Bentham ended with the hope that eventually substances such as soul and God might, like heat and light, be considered as no more than an affection of the world (i.e. a property, quality, or attribute, and therefore a fictitious entity), not objects of prosecution, or affected or real hatred, but considered with mutual forbearance and good humour. BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 376, 15 July 1815. In August 1816 he added a note on the

In 1819 Bentham redrafted and refined his writings of 1811 on the efficiency of human sanctions incorporating ideas from his work on sanctions dating from 1814 on Logic and later on Deontology. He extended the number of sanctions to seven.<sup>43</sup> He examined the sympathetic sanction, that is action undertaken in sympathy for others,<sup>44</sup> of which he had written: “were it not for the operation of [the sympathetic] sanction, no small portion of the good . . . which has place in human affairs, would be an effect without a cause.”<sup>45</sup> This material helped Bentham combat the argument of those who did not believe in religion, but believed that without religion morality and human society would end.<sup>46</sup> Not

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term spirituality, which he identified as a fictitious entity but used neither forbearance nor good humour when doing so: he wrote “spirituality—the idea was an engine in the hands of impostors for dragging in dupes.” BL Add. MS. 29,806, f. 333, 6 August 1815. Later he identified religion as a fictitious entity: see BL Add. MS. 29,809, ff. 9–12, 7 March 1819.

- 43 Six sanctions: BL Add. MS. 29,809, ff. 64–7, 17 February 1819. Seven sanctions: BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 58, 24 February 1821, and *ibid.*, ff. 25–30, March 1821. The extension of sanctions from four to seven was a topic of correspondence from October 1821–November 1822 with Dumont, who was keen to have details of the expanded list, and whether he should include the new list in the third edition of *Traité de législation*, though no expanded list appeared in the third edition of 1830. See Letters 2794, 2815, 2820, 2824 in *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. 10, ed. S. Conway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), and Letters 2821, 2913, 2918, 2936, *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. 11, ed. C. Fuller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). In exasperation Bentham wrote to him in May 1822: “A sheet, to which this exemplification [of drunkenness in the seven sanctions] had been consigned, has found its way—to the moon, I imagine, for upon earth I can not find it.” In fact, the paper in question was among Bentham’s religious writings which were with George Grote at this time.

- 44 BL Add. MS. 29,809, ff. 228–9, 18 February 1819.

- 45 See BL Add. MS. 33,550, f. 31, 11 November 1814, also Bowring, 3:292 [John Bowring, ed. *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (Edinburgh: Willaim Tait, 1838–1843)] “Logical arrangements, or Instruments of invention and discovery.” In the religious writings Bentham wrote at BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 94, 18 February 1819: “by the sympathetic sanction is left, in the instance of each individual, the care of the happiness of all other individuals, in so far as their happiness is at stake upon his conduct.” And at BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 26, 11 March 1821: “If of any one of the human sanctions the tendency were purely good it would be the sympathetic sanction. If of any one of the human sanctions the tendency were purely evil, it would be the antipathetic sanction. But in the case of the sympathetic spring the goodness of its effect and tendency depends altogether upon, and is measured by, the extent of the good to the production of which it tends.”

- 46 BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 98, 29 April 1819: “It is an opinion commonly professed—and it is believed not uncommonly entertained—that religious belief is the only support which morality, which good moral conduct has, that if religious belief were at an end, morality would be at an end, and that with it human society would be at an end. . . . How far this

so, said Bentham. This point also perhaps prompted a moral dimension to the mischiefs in a fourth category of mischiefs that apply to the moral part of man's frame.<sup>47</sup>

In March 1821, clarifying the purpose of the work, Bentham revealed his political agenda. He identified two motives: to free men from terrors and useless privations of which religion is the source, and to destroy the powers of government that employ these forces for the oppression of the subject many.<sup>48</sup> In October he added further clarification: "direct object: maximize converts, collateral object: avoid sufferance at the hands of the political and popular or moral sanction, and suppression of this work. How? minimize irritation, attack natural religion first, giving your enemy as long as you can a loop-hole to creep out at." And Grote took this advice.<sup>49</sup>

The plan in the Appendix does not reflect the organization of the manuscripts Bentham sent. What Grote received were drafts and redrafts, notes and summaries, tied up in parcels of manuscripts vaguely arranged on utility, truth, mischiefs, and marginal summaries. It would be the work of many months if not years to determine a text from this plan.

## 2

In some ways a comparison between Bentham's manuscripts and Grote's text is imprudent. Contextually the first is written by an old man with a lifetime's dedication to the principle of utility, a body of work and a reputation throughout large parts of the French- and English-speaking world to defend, and a desire for reform; the second by a young man, rebelling against a home, as Grote wrote, overclouded with the "deepest night of ignorance,"<sup>50</sup> just setting out in the world with nothing to lose, but a circle of young philosophic radicals to impress. Textually a comprehensive comparison of two such disparate texts presents a task fraught with many difficulties, for example of method, scale,

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opinion is conformable to truth, will it is believed be seen as we advance." As early as c. 1776 Bentham had accused religionists of having an interest in the depression of moral science: see UC lxix. 166.

47 Part V, Section IV was added on 21 April 1819. See BL Add. MS 29,806, f. 520v.

48 BL Add. MS. 29,807, ff. 157–162 at 157, 10 March 1821.

49 BL Add. MS. 29,807, f. 147, 14 October 1821.

50 Specifically, the domination of his father and the harsh and ascetic form of religious belief of his mother: Grote to his sister in law, UCL Add. MS. 266/A2.12, 25 February 1823.

and purpose—the task may even be impossible. Within the limits of this short paper I shall therefore attempt only a few initial comments.

Our knowledge of what Bentham thought of Grote's work comes from a letter Bentham sent to Jean Baptiste Say in August 1823.<sup>51</sup> Bentham denied having met Grote, and disowned the work. His criticisms were second-hand, for he had not read the text. He confessed that Mill had warned him that Grote had "a mode of writing of his own," which he would not change.

He was told that Grote had used uncommon words in preference to common ones (strange criticism coming from Bentham). Had Bentham read the work he might have quarrelled with Grote's use of the term extra-experimental belief. Grote had used the word experimental meaning relating to experience in his essay on magic, but the word was rarely used by Bentham in this way in these manuscripts. The term extra-experimental belief, which has since been attributed to Bentham, was never used by him. For Bentham the more pointed "supposition" served his purpose well. Grote used the phrase in the enumeration of mischiefs to man's intellect: for example, inculcating an extra-experimental belief in God's creation of the world—knowledge of which cannot be found from observation and experience.<sup>52</sup>

Bentham was also told Grote had included an attack on the Lord's prayer "a sort of proceeding which, from first to last," Bentham added without a hint of irony, "I had most religiously abstained from." In fact Grote mentioned the Lord's Prayer only in passing within a sentence,<sup>53</sup> but Bentham had included

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51 Bentham to Jean Baptiste Say, Letter 2988, 4 August 1823, *Correspondence*, vol. 11, 273–7. Why was Bentham so dismissive of the work, or rather, why did he defend his own work on religion to Say, whom Bentham knew was not a believer, and who had suggested Bentham's work *Not Paul but Jesus*, should be entitled *Not Paul nor Jesus*?

52 Another use of a word which might have caused Bentham anxiety was the word Inducement.

Grote used the material on sanctions, but frequently called them inducements, especially in chapter headings. Quite why is not clear. Perhaps he felt the word had connotations of punishment which inducement did not, although Bentham clearly stated that "Inducements to take the right path were called Sanctions, whereas Inducements to take the wrong path were called temptations": see BL Add. MS. 29,807, f. 27, 18 November 1821. Perhaps the word sanctions referred too specifically to IPML, and therefore Bentham. At one point in the first edition, and in all subsequent printed editions, the word appears mistakenly as Superhuman Enjoyments! See George Grote [Philip Beauchamp], *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*, reprinted in 1866 and 1875 (London: R. Carlile, 1822), 54.

53 Grote, *Analysis*, p. 108.

such an attack under the heading mischiefs to man's intellect<sup>54</sup> in eight of the manuscripts he sent to Grote, and James Mill's *Commonplace Book* contains a copy of Bentham's marginal summary sheet for the manuscripts. For Bentham, each clause of the Lord's Prayer was found to be flawed, for example, the idea of forgiveness and atonement for sins—"Atonement i.e. abolition of penal retribution."<sup>55</sup>

Grote enlarged on Bentham's point that God's attributes cannot be equated with those of a benevolent human being, but with those of an earthly tyrant, a point which Grote had made in his essay on *Magic*.<sup>56</sup> But Grote justified his claim on linguistic grounds: the use of praise and blame (God blames man indiscriminately, man praises God unreservedly).

Bentham's writing style, essentially of the eighteenth century, and often criticized as prolix, tiresome, and sometimes obscure, was not replicated by Grote. Neither was Bentham's use of small dialogues, which were often inserted as marginal summaries relating to texts of some complexity. The dialogue, a favoured tool of prose writers in the eighteenth century, provided a good way of making a point persuasively, mainly of course by asking the right questions and giving the answer most suited to your purpose.<sup>57</sup> These dialogues however did not suit Grote's more modern style or purpose, and were omitted.

A fair summation of Grote's work as a whole is that it echoes Bentham's text and summaries, but it is rewritten to accommodate Grote's own thoughts, and in his own style. There are few direct and some indirect quotations from Bentham's manuscripts,<sup>58</sup> as well as from Grote's own essay on *Magic*.<sup>59</sup> Had he read Grote's work, Bentham would have seen that the text contained only

54 BL Add. MS. 29,807, ff. 208–9, 3 October 1811 (marginal summaries), *ibid.*, 29,808, ff. 152–9, 18 September 1811 (text).

55 BL Add. MS. 29,808, f. 121, October 1813.

56 BL Add. MS. 29,531, ff. 26–28.

57 In these dialogues *Caelestis* [Heavenly spokesperson] argues with *Mandamus* [Earthly spokesperson], BL Add. MS. 29,809, ff. 472–3, 19 May 1813; *Heterodox* argues with *Orthodox*, 29,806, ff. 441–2, 25 December 1814; and *Ascetius* [Ascetic] with *Liberius* [Liberal], 29,809, f. 485, 22 May 1812.

58 See, for example, Grote, *Analysis*, 1–3 and BL Add. MS. 29,807, ff. 18, 127; Grote, *Analysis*, 48–9 and BL Add. MS. 29,809, ff. 229–30; and Grote, *Analysis*, 97–8 and BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 152, 5 March 1821.

59 For example, on tyrannical behaviour at "Magick," BL Add. MS. 29,531, ff. 26–8, and Grote, *Analysis*, 17–26. On Father Malebranche at "Magick," BL Add. MS. 29,531, f. 26, and *Analysis*, 17. On miraculous events at "Magick," BL Add. MS. 29,531, ff. 55–6, and *Analysis*, 103.



a small section of his own, as he advised, on Natural Religion: the first part examining the absence of directive rule to be found in Natural Religion, and therefore the efficiency of human sanctions, and the inefficiency of the superhuman sanction to the happiness of mankind; and for the second part Grote cherry-picked the polemical section on mischiefs from Part V, "On the Usefulness of the Religion of Jesus, verity apart," and realigned the mischiefs within Natural Religion organized in two categories: to man himself, and to mankind in general.

Grote shared Bentham's fear of prosecution for publishing this work, and used a pseudonym. But this is not to say that Grote was not convinced by the work he produced. Grote wrote to his sister-in-law in February 1823: "when once you have thoroughly satisfied yourself that an action is sanctioned or commanded by the principle of utility. [You will see that T]his is the only rule which can possibly be delivered & whoever lives without this, must really live without any rule at all."<sup>60</sup> His sister-in-law's path to non-belief had begun with conversations with Grote on the principle of utility, and reading an essay by Mill on sentimental prejudice.<sup>61</sup>

### 3

We have noted above James Mill's influence on Grote and it seems entirely plausible that Mill was involved in discussions with Grote about his work on Bentham's manuscripts. We know also that Mill saw a copy of Grote's manuscript before publication, as John Stuart Mill made a summary of it.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, I think we should not overlook Mill's contribution to Bentham's work.<sup>63</sup> There is ample evidence that Mill was involved in Bentham's religious

60 UCL Add. MS. 266/A 12, 25 February 1823.

61 UCL Add. MS. 226/A2.16, 28 January 1824.

62 *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Autobiography and Literary Essays*, ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), vol. 1, 72–3, James Mill, *Commonplace Books* (hereafter CPB), ed. Robert A. Fenn, 5 vols. (vols. 1–4 published by SCH and London Library can be accessed at <http://www.intellectualhistory.net/mill/>; vol. 5 is located in the Mill-Taylor Collection, LSE Archives), vol. 2, ff. 73–5, 77–8.

63 Bain, Mill's biographer, states that Mill worked with Bentham on his Chrestomathic plans, the *Introduction to Rationale of Judicial Evidence*, and *Elements in the Art of Packing*. Alexander Bain, *James Mill: A Biography* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882), 98–101.

writings.<sup>64</sup> In Mill's *Commonplace Book* there are quotations from the *Morning Chronicle* and William Paley, which are used in *Church-of-Englandism*. Did Mill suggest these to Bentham, or did he copy them from Bentham? We cannot know. In Mill's *Commonplace Book* there are copies/summaries/versions of Bentham's earliest plans of 1811, some notes dating from Bentham's work in 1815, and manuscripts by Bentham on Church reform.<sup>65</sup> The connection is an intimate one.

As well as the textual evidence, there is also the fact that Mill had been with Bentham from the early days of his writings on religion. Mill stayed with Bentham in September 1811 at Barrow Hill when Bentham first began to write extensively on the utility of religion, and at Ford Abbey while Bentham wrote a substantial amount of work on religion.<sup>66</sup> Despite their relationship of master and disciple it seems impossible that they did not influence each other on the subject.

An article by Mill, published a year before his death, and three years after Bentham's death, in the *London Review* of 1835 entitled "The Church, and Its Reform,"<sup>67</sup> contains evidence of Bentham's influence on topics such as the inefficacy of prayer, and the follies associated with belief in posthumous punishment. Mill refers flatteringly to Bentham's arguments in *Church-of-Englandism*, at one point commending a passage for instruction and amusement! But we can also see Mill's own agenda, for example, to reform the clergy through superintendence and inspection, and the clergy in turn to teach their parishioners at parochial assemblies.<sup>68</sup> In this article Mill's aim appears to be to despiritualize the Church, to make it an instrument of "much good," but not to make it redundant. He even jarringly at one point in the article refers to Jesus as "Our Saviour," words a far cry from Grote's and Bentham's unemotive term for another member of the godhead: Invisible Being, Invisible Dispenser, Invisible Creator, Omnipotent Being.

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64 Mill's experience as a Minister of the Church of Scotland surely contributed to Bentham's knowledge of the workings of that church.

65 See, for example, James Mill's CPB, vol. 4, f. 80v, and BL Add. MS. 29,809, f. 306 and 29,808, ff. 221, 192, 165–79; Mill's CPB, vol. 4, f. 81 and BL Add. MS. 29,807, f. 276.

66 We know that at Ford Abbey, Bentham and Mill worked in the same room all day, and discussed their work each evening during a walk around the grounds: Letter 2283, 19 July 1814, *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. 8, ed. S. Conway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 404; Francis to Elizabeth Place, 4 August 1817, Place Papers, BL Add. MS. 35,143, f. 282.

67 *London Review* 1:2 (July 1835), 257–95.

68 I.e. to teach art and science, and elements of politics and jurisprudence.

## 4

What can we say about these three men? Textually we can analyse and annotate their works to find direct quotations, common ground, and divergences. It is harder to extricate the intellectual and emotional ties in the master/pupil relationships. According to Harriet Grote, Bentham destroyed Mill's belief, Mill destroyed Grote's, and she was fairly argued out of the religion after her marriage.<sup>69</sup> And they probably all influenced John Stuart Mill.<sup>70</sup>

The three men used the word Jug to refer to religion. Jug was an abbreviation of Juggernaut or Jagannath, an earthly incarnation of the Indian deity Krishna, an image of whom was dragged through the streets of Puri, in Orrisa, annually on a cart under whose wheels, it was believed, devotees threw themselves and were killed. This word conveyed precisely what they all considered to be the pernicious influence of religion. Jug also gave them a code word they could use, when talking of religion.<sup>71</sup>

The fact that none of them publicly asserted their unbelief, merely reflects the times in which they lived. Was atheism just an intellectual exercise for Mill and Grote, a subject for speculation? I think neither Mill nor Grote sought to convert the population of England into non-believers, but they were keen, as Bentham was, to point out the flaws in the systems of beliefs and practices inculcated by the church, and by this means suggest a rationale for unbelief. When Mill wrote the words Our Saviour was he looking more sympathetically at religion as he neared death? When Grote republished, again pseudonymously, *An Analysis of Natural Religion* in 1865, six years before his own death, did he do so to protect his reputation after death?

Both James Mill and Grote received Christian burials (Grote in Westminster Abbey). Only Bentham pursued his principles beyond, or rather outside the

69 *The Amberley Papers: Bertrand Russell's Family Background*, ed. Bertrand Russell and Patricia Russell, 2 vols. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1937), vol. 1, 421: "Mrs G. told us that James Mill's faith was destroyed when he came to London & knew Bentham—& that James Mill destroyed Mr. Grote's faith after he was grown up & that he suffered much in giving up the old beliefs & so did she after she was married; she says she was fairly argued out of it all."

70 "It would have been totally inconsistent with my father's ideas of duty, to allow me to imbibe notions contrary to his convictions and feelings respecting religion... I am thus one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has, not thrown off religious belief, but never had it. I grew up in a negative state with relation to it." See *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 1, 44–5.

71 See, for example, letters from Grote dated 28 January 1824 and 20 December 1826, UCL Add. ms. 226/A2.16, and A2.20.

grave, and from his Auto-Icon demands still that we consider the utility of religion in the present life.

### Postscript

In 1854 the word juggernaut, used by Bentham, Grote, and Mill forty years earlier as an apt synonym for religion, is recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as being used for the first time in this figurative sense as an institution, practice, or notion to which persons blindly devote themselves, or are ruthlessly sacrificed.

In 1859 Darwin published *The Origin of the Species*.

In 1865 the clergy were required to affirm only a general assent to the 39 articles, the subscription to which, as a young graduate in 1763, had reverberated ominously throughout Bentham's life.

In 1865 J.S. Mill published *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, which contained the passage: "I will call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being will sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."<sup>72</sup> J.S. Mill's *published* declaration echoes sentiments expressed only in the *private* writings of his father and Grote forty years before.<sup>73</sup> Mill: "The first article of any religion is the belief of an all- perfect God. To that I stick. Whatever I cannot reconcile with that I reject. And so rejecting, I am freed to make sad havoc among what has been taught for religion in all ages & countries, & among all sects"; and Grote: "I always reason upon the supposition of God being benevolent—for either he is benevolent or else there is no God—to me at least, in as much as I cannot know him or his character."

In 1869 Thomas Huxley, Darwin's bulldog and a friend of the Grotes, coined the word agnostic, which may have suited Bentham well, to describe someone who thought God "unknown and unknowable."

In 1873 both John Stuart Mill's posthumous *Autobiography* and Alexander Bain's *The Minor Works of George Grote*, revealed Grote and Bentham as responsible for *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, which prompted two new editions of the work in 1875, at London and at Paris, acknowledging their authorship of the work for the first time.

<sup>72</sup> John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1865), 103.

<sup>73</sup> James Mill, CPB, vol. 4, f. 81v, and UCL Add. MS. 266/A2.3, 1 June 1822.

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## A Regular Politician in Breeches: The Life and Work of Harriet Lewin Grote

*Sarah Richardson*

Many wives of great men are very often overlooked; the practical and emotional support they provide to their husbands is taken as a given, and unremarked upon. Some women achieve recognition in their own right as full partners to their husband's endeavours. A very few are appreciated for their own contributions to society. Harriet Grote (née Lewin, 1792–1878) was a remarkable woman who has received insufficient credit for the assistance she provided to George Grote throughout his career; their joint work as partners on political campaigns such as the introduction of the secret ballot; and her own important role in mid-Victorian public affairs. This chapter seeks to assess her life and work in a number of spheres: her personal life and marriage; her patronage of music and the arts; her political and philanthropic activities; and her networks, particularly those with foreign politicians and luminaries. She has received little scholarly attention, and is most commonly discussed because of her relationship with George Grote.<sup>1</sup> Such an assessment of her life and work enriches understanding of George Grote's political and intellectual career, but more importantly recaptures the under-appreciated significance of Harriet.

### Early Life and Marriage

Harriet was the third daughter of Thomas Lewin and his wife, Mary Hale. The family were comfortably off, living on Thomas Lewin's substantial earnings from his colonial service in Madras.<sup>2</sup> It was a large family of twelve children,

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1 Harriet does receive some attention in my book which discusses her contributions alongside other influential middle-class political women in nineteenth-century Britain. See, Sarah Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2013).

2 Biographical information on Thomas Lewin and Mary Hale may be found in T.H. Lewin, ed., *The Lewin Letters: A Selection from the Correspondence and Diaries of an English Family, 1756–1884*, 2 vols. (London: Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd., 1909).

five girls and seven boys, but as Mary, the eldest daughter married early, and Anne, the second daughter, died in infancy, Harriet played a key role in the family. In particular, she influenced the education and upbringing of her younger siblings. The Lewin sisters were educated by governesses, although with a focus on music and the arts. However, in spite of this traditional upbringing, Harriet possessed an unconventional spirit from an early age. She excelled in riding and other outdoor, athletic pursuits. Her father's diary noted numerous occasions when she contravened the expected behaviour and conduct of young ladies. For example, at the age of 14 she was sent away from the dinner table "for having climbed up the workman's ladder to the roof of the house."<sup>3</sup> Her nephew (also) Thomas Lewin recorded these memories:

She was strong and high spirited when young, being known in her own family as "the Empress" from her imperious disposition. Her governesses tried in vain to prevent her from riding horses bare-backed, climbing trees, ladders and hay-ricks, or taking her young sisters out in a row boat. When her father resided in Clarges Street, London she dazzled the young ladies in the opposite house with a mirror and flew paper kites out of the window until their father, the Duke of Grafton lodged a formal complaint.<sup>4</sup>

She frequently clashed with her family during her childhood and after her marriage complaining whilst young of her inept governesses, her insufficient allowance, and her mother's harshness. After her marriage, her siblings would demand to return home from visits because of Harriet's "cross disposition."<sup>5</sup> In a short autobiographical sketch that Harriet wrote in her teens, she ascribes her mother's distant nature to the fact that she had a large family early in life. However, she appears to have had a better relationship with her father who supervised her musical and literary education. In his diaries, he too, notes affectionate details of their conversations and musical soirées. Although Harriet's upbringing was relatively conventional for girls of the upper middle class, her experiences chime with recent research on nineteenth-century parenting which has challenged the established stereotypes of the mother as "angel in the household," overseeing the education and early life of her children and the stern, patriarchal, distant, father. There were competing models of

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<sup>3</sup> Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 143.

<sup>4</sup> Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 148.

<sup>5</sup> Further accounts of Harriet's child and young adulthood are given in E. Eastlake, *Mrs Grote: A Sketch* (London: J. Murray, 1880), especially ch. 2.



parenthood and a wide variety of experiences and customs.<sup>6</sup> Thomas Lewin's diaries reveal him to be an engaged and supportive parent, distancing himself from family spats and disputes, but taking an active role in shaping his children's (both of his sons and his daughters) education. He was also responsible for Harriet's early political socialisation which political scientists agree instil in children their basic ideological approaches.<sup>7</sup> Harriet was inspired to debate, to lead and to develop considered opinions. Her formative years were coloured by momentous events in Europe and she was encouraged to keep up with news of the French wars. She summed up the significant contribution her childhood experiences made to her later life by stating that "everything may be hoped from a childhood that has displayed the 'right faults'."<sup>8</sup>

In spite of his obvious pride in her achievements, Harriet's father expressed surprise when in 1815, a local wealthy clergyman, the Reverend Elmsley, made a declaration of love to her. This caused some family turmoil, as Harriet rejected her suitor, sending her mother into a "torrent of passion." Three years later, when the family moved to Kent, she met and became engaged to George Grote, whose family owned a neighbouring property. According to Harriet's account of her courtship, Reverend Elmsley intervened early in their relationship falsely telling George that Harriet was already engaged.<sup>9</sup> This led George

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6 On differing models of parenting, see for example, the special issue of *Women's History Review*, "Revisiting Motherhood: new histories of the public and private," 8 (1999); John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999) and Eleanor Gordon and Gwynneth Nair, "Domestic fathers and the Victorian parental role," *Women's History Review* 15 (2006): 551–9.

7 The literature on the political socialisation of children was inspired by the seminal work by Herbert H. Hyman, *Political Socialization* (New York: Free Press, 1959). Key works include D. Easton, *A System Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965) and R.E. Dawson, K. Prewitt, and K.S. Dawson, *Political Socialization* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1977). However, by the 1980s and 1990s the methodological base of such research was questioned and political scientists have moved on to assess the development of "political knowledge." For a review of the current status of political socialisation studies see: Robert L. Dudley and Alan R. Gitelson, "Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Youth Civic Development," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36 (2003): 263–67. An interesting example of political socialisation in an historical context may be found in Gordon J. Schochet, "Patriarchalism, Politics and Mass Attitudes in Stuart England," *Historical Journal* 12 (1969): 413–41.

8 Eastlake, *Mrs Grote*, 32.

9 Harriet Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote* (London: John Murray, 1873). Interestingly, Harriet glosses over their elopement in her account of their courtship and marriage. Harriet's account of George Grote's life may be usefully read alongside the memoirs of her nephew, Thomas Lewin and her biographer, Elizabeth Eastlake. See Lewin, *The Lewin Letters* and Eastlake, *Mrs Grote*.

to confide in his father, who extracted a pledge from him that he would not marry without parental permission. Although the Lewin family was relatively wealthy, George's father had set his sights on his son marrying a city heiress and thus rejected Harriet on financial grounds. Once Elmsley's deception had been uncovered, George and Harriet continued to meet. This was without his father's knowledge, much to Harriet's family's discomfiture, and her father turned George away from the house on several occasions. Finally, in March 1820, Harriet announced to her family that she and George had married clandestinely at Bexley Church. Thomas Lewin immediately wrote to the presiding clergyman protesting that he had no knowledge that his daughter intended to marry and desiring him to use the letter as a record in case the Grote family accused him of duplicity.<sup>10</sup>

The marriage was generally happy and fulfilling. During their courtship, George took charge of Harriet's political and intellectual education, setting her reading and encouraging her to work on digests of particular themes, which she would send to him for comment. Early in their marriage, the couple lived in a house adjacent to the Prescott and Grote banking house in Threadneedle Street (or Threddle as it was termed by Harriet) where George was a partner. Their close neighbours were the key members of the Philosophical Radicals circle, Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. Two mornings a week a small number of politicians and intellectuals including John Stuart Mill, Charles Buller and Thomas Eyton Tooke would meet at 8.30 am to discuss logic, metaphysics, political economy and mental philosophy. Harriet took a full and active part in these discussions and in the regular salons she held in the evenings. Her personality shines through in an account of one such discussion related to George Norman, director of the Bank of England in 1823:

we shall be consigned over to the interminable controversy about the "measure of value." The last discussion I heard on this most fertile subject was between Messrs. Ricardo, Mill, Grote and McCulloch (of Edinburgh), in the "Threddle," and after about one and a half hour's laborious exertion (which, however, was not profitless), it was resolved to postpone any further argumentation *sine die*, Mr McCulloch closing the debate with, "Wall, I think the *quastion* must be *soobjacted* to a more *sevear anallasis* before we shall arrive at a definitive conclusion."<sup>11</sup>

10 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 145–6.

11 Harriet Grote, ed., *Posthumous Papers: Comprising Selections from Familiar Correspondence during Half a Century* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1874 for private circulation).

Harriet nicknamed the circle, the “Brangles” and amusingly stated that she was surrounded by the “Ancient” (referring to George’s historical interests in Plato and Aristotle) and the “Modern” (alluding to the discussions on more recent philosophers such as Kant and Bentham). Harriet’s major contribution to the marriage was to encourage George to be more outgoing and she managed the social life of the household. Political salons and discussion groups, such as the one at the Grote’s house, provided spaces within the household for women to engage in debates, discussions and decisions on public affairs. Such assemblies were usually mixed sex gatherings but were often initiated by women and were located in female-dominated spaces within the household such as Morning Rooms, Music Rooms and Drawing Rooms. In London, in particular, political salons organised and managed by women were at the centre of public life. It was not uncommon to attend more than one salon or party in an evening and conversations were thus transmitted across the city. Harriet’s political sociability increased once George became a member of parliament in 1832. The “at homes” and regular congregations provided the spaces for the organisation of more formal political engagement and this was true of Harriet’s activism. Thus discussions on political economy or the necessity for secret ballot over the breakfast and dining table led directly to her publications, correspondence and lobbying on these issues.

The relationship did have some stresses and strains. Their first child died a few days after birth and Harriet was seriously ill with puerperal fever. The couple adopted or cared for several children over the course of the marriage. For example, Harriet wrote to her sister in 1843, “Arthur Grote’s wife died in childbirth and he has sent home her children to whoever will take them so as you know I am a born ‘dupe,’ I suppose they will come to me in March—a girl of 4, and a boy of 2½.”<sup>12</sup> Towards the end of their life together in the mid 1860s, George had a liaison with the sculptor, Susan Durant, who had been commissioned to create a marble portrait medallion of him. This caused some estrangement between the couple when Harriet remonstrated with him (in her words) to protect his public reputation.<sup>13</sup> It is perhaps not a coincidence that Harriet began to compile her biography of George at exactly this moment as a means of recapturing the happiness of their long partnership. In the preface to *The Personal Life of George Grote*, she apologised for including so much information about herself but stated, “the truth is, that our two lives ran in one

<sup>12</sup> Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Bertrand and Patricia Russell, ed., *The Amberley Papers: The Letters and Diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley*, 2 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1937), vol. 1, 477.

channel, and it would have been difficult to part them in writing this retrospective memoir.”<sup>14</sup>

### Art and Music

Harriet was an important patron of the arts (encompassing art, music, theatre, dance, sculpture and literature) in Victorian England. Her own love of art and music, coupled with her enthusiastic capacity for sociability and her political radicalism led her to take an active role in promoting individual artists as well as promoting women’s art more generally. Her example contradicts the prevalent view that art and culture reinforced an ideology of separate spheres in nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>15</sup>

From the earliest days of her marriage Harriet supported struggling or controversial artists. In the 1830s she undertook the task of introducing Fanny Elssler, a ballerina with a notorious past, to London society with a view of “making an honest woman of her.”<sup>16</sup> Elssler had an illegitimate son following an affair with Leopold, Prince of Salerno and on arrival in England was again pregnant. The Grotes took care of her small daughter, Thérèse, whilst Fanny travelled abroad in Europe and America and Harriet left a legacy to the child in her will. In spite of her colourful reputation, Elssler was a sought-after dancer and one of the most talented and notable ballerinas of the Romantic ballet period. However, it took immense courage and spirit for the Grotes to support publicly the wayward ballerina and rumours abounded about the father of her child and her relationships. In 1841 Harriet wrote to her sister:

When people say, “You will certainly get cut for what you are doing: people will not pardon you for such a gross breach of etiquette,” I always reply, “Indeed! Well in that case I shall be rid of a lot of tiresome people, and have more time for myself—that’s all,” for which I receive a look of astonishment and the exclamation, “You are a most extraordinary woman,

14 Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote*, v.

15 See for example, Janet Wolff, “The Culture of Separate Spheres: the Role of Culture in Nineteenth-Century Public and Private Life,” in Janet Wolff and John Seed, ed., *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 117–34.

16 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 148.

to be sure!" I find, my dear sister, that a clever and virtuous woman can afford to act generously and live down the vulgar remarks of the herd.<sup>17</sup>

Her courage, notwithstanding, Harriet's association with Elssler also gave rise to some humorous moments. Her brother-in-law related how he visited the Grotes and found Harriet in a short pink skirt and wings, "bounding forth from the back drawing room to show Mr Grote a *pas seul à la Elssler*."<sup>18</sup>

In 1845, Harriet encountered another rising European star, Jenny Lind, later known as the Swedish nightingale. She had travelled to Stockholm to visit her sister, Frances von Koch and heard Lind sing in the opera, *Sonnambula*. She immediately wrote a review for the *Spectator*, probably one of the first that appeared in England, and encouraged Lind to come to London. Lind's arrival was delayed because she signed contracts with two rival impresarios, Alfred Bunn at Covent Garden and Benjamin Lumley at Her Majesty's Theatre. However, Harriet acted as her patron, hostess and business manager greeting her on her arrival in 1847 accompanied by Felix Mendelssohn who had written "Hear Ye, Israel" in *Elijah* specifically for Lind.<sup>19</sup> Lind's debut in May 1847 at Her Majesty's Theatre as Alice in Meyerbeer's *Roberto il diavolo* was an immense success. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert attended, the monarch writing in her diary, "the great event of the evening was Jenny Lind's appearance and her *complete* triumph. She has a most exquisite, powerful, and really quite peculiar voice, so round, soft and flexible, and her acting is charming and touching and very natural."<sup>20</sup> The evening marked the beginning of "Jenny Lind" fever and she was perhaps the first opera singer to be marketed in such a way. Her image was reproduced on handkerchiefs, matchboxes and snuff tins and there was Jenny Lind soap, scent and bonnets. Harriet continued to manage Lind's career in England, hosting parties in London, providing rest and quiet at her country house in East Burnham, and even organising a professional tour of the West Country.

Other artists supported in England by the Grotes included the musicians Liszt and Mendelssohn, the latter allegedly writing *Midsummer's Night Dream* after being inspired by woodland whilst visiting East Burnham, and the actress, Fanny Kemble. Kemble provided a vivid portrait of Harriet with a stick in her hand, a man's hat on her head and a coachman's box-coat of drab cloth with

17 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 2, 3.

18 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 149.

19 Joan Bulman, *Jenny Lind: A Biography* (London: James Barrie, 1956).

20 Queen Victoria cited in Isabelle Emerson, *Five Centuries of Women Singers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 155.

manifold capes over her petticoats, stalking about the house and grounds: "alternately superintending matters of domestic economy and discussing with equal knowledge and discrimination questions of musical criticism and taste."<sup>21</sup>

Harriet's extensive connections with French literary, artistic, political and intellectual circles led her, in 1860, to publish a biography of the Dutch-French Romantic painter, Ary Scheffer.<sup>22</sup> Scheffer was a liberal, closely connected with the salon at the Château de la Grange, the residence of Lafayette. He joined the Charbonnerie, a secret society emulating the Italian Carbonari movement, which supported ideals of freedom, national identity and the sovereignty of the people. He was also connected to the Duc d'Orléans and acted as painting tutor to his children. In the 1830 revolution he rode with Augustin Thierry to the castle of Neuilly to ask the future Louis Philippe to become the new king of France. During the period of the July monarchy, Scheffer was at his most productive as the court artist. He was a prolific portrait painter, later turning his attention to religious subjects. He ceased to exhibit after 1846 and many of his later paintings were only made public after his death in 1858. Harriet sought to capture the political and artistic life of the painter, writing:

It will be my endeavour, in the following pages, to keep in view this double existence, whilst throwing into somewhat fuller light those qualities and those social and political relations which, in the case of Ary Scheffer, not unfrequently exalted the artist into the patriotic citizen.<sup>23</sup>

She was not uncritical of his paintings confessing that his *Margaret at the Spinning Wheel* which had been cited as one of Scheffer's best productions, had colouring which was "monotonous, sickly, and faded" and the attitude of Margaret was "unimpressive."<sup>24</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the *Memoir*, reveals as much about Harriet's character, as about the life and work of Scheffer. The pages are peppered with anecdotal evidence about her time in France during the momentous events of 1830, 1848 and 1851. For example, she wrote that in 1851 she called at the Scheffer residence within a day or two of the revolt:

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<sup>21</sup> Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 383.

<sup>22</sup> Harriet Grote, *Memoir of the Life of Ary Scheffer* (London: John Murray, 1860).

<sup>23</sup> Grote, *Memoir of the Life of Ary Scheffer*, 1–2.

<sup>24</sup> Grote, *Memoir of the Life of Ary Scheffer*, 23.

I found Scheffer at home, and alone with his wife. The interview was, in a measure, at once solemn and sad. The collective ruins of thirty years' illusory hopes and struggles stood before me as it were.<sup>25</sup>

In 1857, Harriet, with the help of influential friends, founded the Society of Female Artists to assist women painters in getting their work exhibited. Access to exhibitions and exhibiting bodies was often categorically denied to women and the Society was founded as a response to the discriminatory, restrictive membership of other bodies. Harriet used friends such as the MP, Joseph Parkes, to place favourable articles in papers such as the *Times*. In May, 1857, an article put forward a defence of a society exhibiting only women artists writing that, "supposing the Female Artists' Society to produce no greater an amount of mediocrity, compared with works of merit, than the old societies, no partisan of the stronger sex need grudge to the weaker an opportunity of entering the field of honourable competition."<sup>26</sup> The Society's first exhibition, in June 1857, was also reviewed favourably in the press. Over 350 works were on show and the *Times* concluded: "that we had lady-artists of course everybody knew, but that we had lady-artists who could fill a large room in Oxford-street with creditable works is a fact now made known for the first time."<sup>27</sup> Harriet devoted considerable time and energy to the Society. George also played a role, acting as guarantor to their rent for the premises on Oxford Street where the group exhibited their artistic work. She wrote to Joseph Parkes in June describing the writing of the constitution recalling earlier times and causes:

I hold Committee same day, to arrange "our Society's" *Constitution*. I having played *Jeremy Bentham* on the occasion, and cooked it myself. George Grote insisting on including "vote by Ballot," the old dusty box is to be vamped up for the purpose.<sup>28</sup>

The positive response that the Society met with in its earliest days soon dissipated. By 1871, the *Times* was questioning the wisdom of women-only exhibitions: "unless female artists can hold their own with men they had better, we submit, not exhibit at all."<sup>29</sup> Successful women painters and sculptors were also loathe to save their best work for the Society's exhibitions as their careers

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25 Grote, *Memoir of the Life of Ary Scheffer*, 94.

26 *Times*, 25 May 1857.

27 *Times*, 1 June 1857.

28 Grote, *Posthumous Papers*, 144.

29 *Times*, 15 February 1871.



were better served by appearing at the Royal Academy and other mixed-sex institutions. Although the Society was supported by prominent women such as Louise Jopling (who designed the cover for the 1887 Exhibition catalogue), Rosa Bonheur and Henrietta Ward, it was less successful in challenging the inequalities faced by female artists. Thus, ultimately the Society was doomed to fail and may, indeed, have reinforced Victorian perceptions that women artists were presumed to lack talent and to focus on particular “feminine” subjects.<sup>30</sup>

### Networks

Although the political world was generally seen as male dominated in reality there were spaces and arenas for women to participate and Harriet's life and work illustrate these opportunities. Family and community networks were of central importance to the functioning of parliament and the state and political institutions were connected together by a chain of personal and familial contacts. These links were often facilitated by extensive correspondence networks which kept news and information flowing. Harriet was no exception to this. Indeed, she wrote to her sister in 1843 that, “I write and write well nigh 6 octavo pages a day, comprising notes, orders, replies to begging letters, foreign correspondence, etc.”<sup>31</sup> Letters provided Harriet with a means to interact with the public realm. Many of her correspondents were male politicians that she wished to influence, on her own behalf, or that of George or of her other contacts. In the 1820s and 1830s, her key communicants were members of the radical circle including Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, William Molesworth, Francis Place and Joseph Parkes. At the end of her life, she regularly corresponded with members of the cabinet, including the Prime Minister, Gladstone himself. Her exchanges were always frank and candid and betrayed no sense that she was somehow transgressing social expectations of feminine conduct. She wrote humorously, often teasing the eminent men she engaged in debate. She used nicknames: Grote was the historian, Place, Father Francis, Bentham, the Hermit and Layard, Ben Abou. Her communications were direct. During

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30 See for example, Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1981); Clarissa Campbell Orr, *Women in the Victorian Art World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); and Patricia Zakreski, *Representing Female Artistic Labour, 1848–1890: Refining Work for the Middle-Class Woman* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

31 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 2, 23.

the 1830s when the radical party held the balance of power in the House of Commons she wrote to Place:

I came up yesterday, purposely to be near George, during this struggle, when lo, I find Lord John shirking the discussion, which is staved off till next week. Anything to gain time, which is in fact no gain at all to them. One of 2 things, play the cards firmly and boldly, or hoop their stays in, after such a cowardly course will do us no good. We can do as well in opposition without being hampered with our allies.<sup>32</sup>

This does not read like a woman constrained by her sex. Indeed, this is evidence of Harriet asserting her leadership of the radical group, calling for direct action against the Whig government. Letter-writing gave Harriet, and other women, effective contact with male politicians and other leading public figures, whilst shielding them from the social opprobrium that might accompany more direct campaigning. It is the subversive and more challenging nature of Harriet's correspondence that led her to ask her friends to destroy all surviving letters from her (an instruction which fortunately many ignored).

Of equal importance, was Harriet's communication with other like-minded women. Her female friendships encompassed leading literary, political and intellectual figures such as Sarah Austin, Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Eastlake and Elizabeth Gaskell. Martineau wrote to Harriet on hearing of George's death in 1871:

I have dreamed so many and such long conversations with him and you (in the broken sleeps of illness) that it would feel unnatural to be entirely silent during these first days of your loneliness. I seem to have known you always—so vivid were the details of your early married life—of Mr Grote's devotedness, his aspirations about his History, and of the conflict when the call came to him to turn to political life... I cannot forget for an hour how full your heart must be. I wish I knew how your health is, that I might understand how far you are able to bear this *last* of the struggles of our strange and mysterious human life.<sup>33</sup>

Harriet used her female, as with her male contacts, for lobbying, campaigning, exchanging news and gossip. They can also be viewed as a shared resource as

32 British Library [BL] Add. MSS 37949/377, Harriet Grote to Frances Place, 2 June [n.d.].

33 Grote, *Posthumous Papers*, 335.

she exhorted many correspondents to communicate information on her pet campaigns (such as the secret ballot) more widely.

Most significantly, Harriet's correspondence networks kept her international links live and active. She had long-lasting communications with Comte, Faucher and de Tocqueville (among others) and was able to call upon these contacts to help to disseminate information on events in France to a wider public. Her European networks were also of importance in her promotion of art, music and culture. She corresponded extensively with a range of artists including Mendelssohn, Liszt, Chopin, Scheffer, Lind and Kemble. This put her at the centre of public life, both in culture and in politics.

Although Harriet's correspondence networks were of crucial importance in establishing and maintaining her place in public life, there is no doubt that her sociability and face-to-face encounters helped to place her as one of the leading women in public life in this period. From her earliest days of marriage, when living in Threadneedle Street she maintained a regular and popular salon. Salons straddled the private, semi-private and public realms. Harriet's salons were mixed-sex but they were managed and controlled by her alone. This female-managed space meant that she could decide who was invited and the topics of conversation. In her salons, men and women met on equal terms. When George was in Parliament, Harriet rented some apartments in Westminster, at the corner of Parliament Street and Bridge Street to facilitate meetings of the radical party. She wrote to her sister, "here we shall be most of the Session save Saturdays and Sundays—coteries of friends, political and other, and as much intellectual society as the world affords."<sup>34</sup> She sometimes withdrew invitations from those who had displeased her (or the party) and also organised gatherings on behalf of other male politicians. She was a regular attendee at Parliament, in the 1830s squeezing into the roof space above the Commons to peer down into the chamber through the chandeliers. Later in the new Commons, she begged male politicians for tickets to the Ladies' Gallery or "cage" as it was known (due to the heavy grille on the front of the gallery) to listen to debates on diverse subjects such as Ireland, law reform and the suffrage.

It is clear that sociability was a central aspect of Harriet's "female experience." Her face-to-face and correspondence networks were crucial to her public persona as a politician, writer and cultural leader. These, largely informal interactions offered her a strategy of participating actively in public debates without transgressing social norms of behaviour for wealthy women. However, her personality was not subjugated and she engaged directly and

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34 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 292.

robustly with a wide range of leading public figures, both male and female. Her surviving correspondence captures only a fraction of her letter-writing and social pursuits, but they reveal her to be an opinionated, amusing, indefatigable activist.

### Parliamentary Politics and the Secret Ballot

Grote family life in the 1830s was dominated by parliamentary politics. Harriet was generally more radical than George in her views. For example, George resisted attempts by leading radicals such as Joseph Parkes and Francis Place to draw him into the leadership of the Reform movement, reluctant to be seen to support public disorder. In contrast, Harriet wrote, "I do not shrink from reforming principles because they may lead to civil war. If political freedom can only be wrung from its foes by war, it must even be bought with that price."<sup>35</sup> However, although in private she was more radical than her husband, in public, she supported his political endeavours and particularly his desire to enter the reforming Parliament. Recent scholarly work has emphasised the role that elite women could play in parliamentary and electoral politics. Women were often key in co-ordinating the social dimension of elections by mobilising networks of support, raising funds and acting as intermediaries for their male relatives.<sup>36</sup> Harriet's surviving correspondence from the 1830s shows she was a significant member of George's electoral team liaising with prominent radical politicians, organising fund-raising parties and soirées, and canvassing for votes. Her role was particularly important, as George was standing for the City of London, a constituency with one of the largest electorates in the country, whilst continuing to work for the bank. Indeed, on his election in December 1832, Harriet wrote proudly to her father, "He is now Senior Member for the capital of the Empire..." alluding to the fact that George had headed the poll of the four-member constituency.<sup>37</sup> The scale of the task was phenomenal. Eighteen thousand electors required canvassing, so therefore an election committee numbering over three hundred people was formed. Harriet noted that "Seventy clerks at work all day and night of yesterday for Grote's committee at

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35 Eastlake, *Mrs Grote*, 72–3.

36 Sarah Richardson, "The Role of Women in Electoral Politics in Yorkshire During the 1830s," *Northern History* 32 (1996): 133–51; K.D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c. 1754–90* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

37 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 74.

the King's Head *alone*. What an *apparatus!*"<sup>38</sup> George regularly spoke at meetings of four or five thousand people. Harriet's undoubted social skills acted as a foil for his more reserved and retiring manner. She also managed the theatricality of the election rituals.<sup>39</sup> In a letter to her sister, she termed the week of the election a "Carnival of Vanity." Harriet organised a series of dinners to entertain voters (a significant element of the election process) culminating in a celebration at the London Tavern after George's election to Parliament. The highlight of the evening was when a screen was pulled away to reveal a wreath of laurels formed by green lamps with an inscription in white light in the centre: "To Grote. The 8412" whilst a band played "The Conquering Hero." The Stewards were decked out in George Grote's colours of crimson, and Harriet made hundreds of rosettes and buttonholes for the electoral committee.<sup>40</sup>

George's triumph at heading the poll with nearly a quarter of the votes cast was not replicated in the following two general elections of 1835 and 1837. In the latter he only retained his seat from the Conservative challenge by six votes. This was one factor in his decision to retire from Parliament in 1841. However, Harriet was tireless in her campaigning and canvassing role. In December 1834 she wrote to Elizabeth Gaskell of the radicals' attempts to find a fourth candidate to keep the Tories from winning a seat by default. She wrote triumphantly:

we have actually prevailed on no less a personage than *the Governor of the Bank of England* to start as our fourth Reformer!!! . . . He is Reformer enough to satisfy our "movement" and his station and personal character command the votes and confidence of the *timid rich* voters; so that it is impossible to over-estimate the importance to Reformers of this step on his part. We imagine the Tories will be planet-struck at the firing of our *great gun!*<sup>41</sup>

James Pattison, the governor of the Bank of England, duly stood in the 1835 election coming second in the poll.

Harriet's regular parties, dinners and salons were instrumental in keeping the small group of radicals together during the 1830s. This was especially important as the Whig government majority declined during the decade and they became more dependent on the support of the radical faction to pass key

38 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 74.

39 For more details on these see F. O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: the Social Meaning of Elections in England, 1780–1860," *Past and Present* 135 (1992): 79–115.

40 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, vol. 1, 290–1.

41 Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote*, 94.

measures. Harriet termed George as the “chief of opposition,” however, it is clear from the surviving correspondence, that she was the more radical partner and acted assiduously to promote reform. She also favoured taking a hard line with the Whigs, by threatening to withdraw radical support, a tactic that was rejected by George. For example, she wrote to Francis Place in 1835,

We certainly “hit it” Father Francis, and, I am persuaded, the reason is we don’t by commercing with Whig promises, get Whig spectacles astride our noses, and Whig hearts in our breasts, instead of what you and I carry there now.<sup>42</sup>

She later recorded an account of this heady period in her short book, *The Philosophical Radicals*.<sup>43</sup> Many commentators, including Francis Place, Joseph Parkes and Richard Cobden viewed Harriet as the *de facto* leader of the faction, Cobden viewed her as the greater politician of the couple, later writing to Parkes, “Had she been a man, she would have been the leader of a party.”<sup>44</sup>

George’s parliamentary career is perhaps best remembered by his commitment to the campaign to introduce the secret ballot at elections. At the beginning of 1833 the Grotes dined with William Prescott, Henry Warburton, John Romilly, Joseph Hume and James Mill. After some discussion it was decided that George Grote should be the person to undertake the Ballot question in the ensuing session of Parliament. The Philosophical Radicals considered the campaign for the secret ballot as the cornerstone of their parliamentary programme. Intimidation and corruption were widespread, and the radicals particularly resented the power of local aristocrats to shepherd their tenants to the polls. Secret ballot would eliminate some of the most blatant forms of patron pressure. However, by promoting the issue, expecting the Whig government to join with the Tories and resist the measure, the radicals hoped to expose the hypocrisy and self-interest of the ruling party and label them traitors of reform.<sup>45</sup> Public debate on the efficacy and desirability of the ballot

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42 BL Add MSS 35150/52, Harriet Grote to Francis Place, 7 June 1835.

43 Harriet Grote, *The Philosophical Radicals of 1832. Comprising the Life of Sir William Molesworth and Some Incidents Connected with the Reform Movement from 1832 to 1842* (London: Savill and Edwards, 1866).

44 Jessie Buckley, *Joseph Parkes of Birmingham and the Part Which He Played in Radical Reform Movements from 1825 to 1845* (London: Methuen, 1926), 151.

45 For an account of the importance of this issue to the Philosophical Radicals see Joseph Hamburger, *Intellectuals in Politics: John Stuart Mill and the Philosophic Radicals* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965).

was frequently phrased in terms both gendered and patriotic. Open voting was regarded as manly and a characteristic of Englishness. William IV for example reluctantly gave his support to the 1832 Reform Bill on condition that the clause introducing the secret ballot was removed. The ballot he averred was inconsistent with the manly spirit and freedom to state opinions openly that characterised the people of England.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, the radical periodical the *Examiner* reported in 1842 that the ballot did not suit the brave and honest character of the English people.<sup>47</sup> England was frequently contrasted with America and France, two countries where the secret ballot had been introduced. The English it was argued possessed a mature democracy and had no need for the “protection” of the ballot. The concealment of the open expression of opinions associated with the secret ballot was alleged to undermine not just the national character but also the manhood of participants in elections. These charges of un-Englishness and effeminacy played well with Parliamentarians and with many voters and were difficult to counter by proponents of secret voting.<sup>48</sup>

Harriet threw herself enthusiastically into the campaign to secure the secret ballot for Parliamentary elections. George took the lead in Parliament repeatedly presenting motions on the ballot during the 1830s.<sup>49</sup> Harriet ran the campaign in the country: garnering support for the cause from radicals and other leading figures; demonstrating model ballot boxes; eliciting the technical expertise of Charles Babbage in the search for an ideal model box which would meet all requirements for perfect secrecy; and writing articles in support of the ballot in periodicals and magazines. She spent the winter of 1836–7 devising methods of taking votes so as to ensure secrecy. Eventually a “Ballot box” was perfected, and some 40 or 50 models in wood distributed all over the kingdom.

In 1837 she wrote to Babbage:

I have been desirous of sending to your house the model of the Balloting frame which we have adopted, for the present, as the most complete

46 Percy Fitzgerald, *The Life and Times of William IV*, 2 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1884), vol. 1, 337.

47 *Examiner*, 25 June 1842.

48 For one attempt to counter the charges of concealment, unmanliness and un-Englishness see Lord Nugent, *The Ballot Discussed in a Letter to the Earl of Durham* (London: James Ridgway and Sons, 1837). See also Bruce Kinzer, “The un-Englishness of the Secret Ballot,” *Albion* 10 (1978): 237–56.

49 For more on Grote’s campaigns see Nicolas Haines, “The Ballot and the Dream: Footnotes to a Century of ‘Educated Democracy,’” *Political Science Quarterly* 83 (1968): 530–50 and Bruce Kinzer, *The Ballot Question in Nineteenth-Century English Politics* (New York, NY: Garland, 1982).



method by which all the advantages of secrecy may be accomplished, and none of the objections to the Ballot process admitted to act, as to impairing the effective working thereof. If I can send it on Saturday, I will, along with a dozen of polling cards—you can shew it to those of your friends who take an interest in the subject. It has been exhibited at the Reform Club.<sup>50</sup>

A year later she dispatched model boxes, instructions and polling cards across the country to Exeter, Stroud, Bridport, Birmingham, Derbyshire, and Scotland, sending “shoals” of letters to her extensive contacts to keep the momentum going for the ballot campaign.<sup>51</sup> She also established a Ballot Union to promote the cause. Although the efforts of the Grotes were not successful in the 1830s and, indeed, George retired from Parliament disillusioned with politics, Harriet continued her efforts for electoral reform signing the famous women’s suffrage petition in 1866.

The political differences between George and Harriet may be illuminated by a conversation they held in the 1870s when the secret ballot looked certain to be introduced following the Second Reform Act which enfranchised male household voters in urban areas.

*George:* Yes, certainly, the Ballot seems to me, now, not unlikely to be ere long carried.

*Harriet:* Well, then, you will have lived to see your own favourite measure triumph over all obstacles, and you will of course feel great satisfaction thereat?

*George:* I should have done so had it not been for the recent alteration in the suffrage. Since the wide expansion of the voting element, I confess that the value of the Ballot has sunk in my estimation. I do not, in fact, think the elections will be affected by it, one way or another, as far as party interests are concerned.

*Harriet:* Still, you will at all events get at the genuine preference of the constituency in choosing their candidate.

*George:* No doubt; but then, again, I have come to perceive that the choice between one man and another, among the English people, signifies less than I used formerly to think it did. Take a section of society, cut it through from

50 BL Add MSS 37190/91 Harriet Grote to Charles Babbage, 6 April 1837.

51 Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote*, 125–6. See also her letter to Mrs Daniel Gaskell, 24 December 1836: “We have had *shoals* of letters expressive of delight with, and approbation of, the contrivance [ballot box]; and many who wished for secrecy, yet mistrusted its being attained, have become hearty balloters, since ‘the box’ was exhibited to them” (109).

top to bottom, and examine the composition of the successive layers. They are much alike throughout the scale. The opinions, all based on the same social instincts: never upon a clear or enlightened perception of *general interests*. Every particular class pursuing its own, the result is, a universal struggle for the advantages accruing from party supremacy.<sup>52</sup>

Harriet then, was a firm and stalwart supporter of the radical cause and she wavered little in her views over the period. She favoured direct action and was, in the words of Richard Cobden, “a regular politician in breeches.” George was more cerebral and intellectual, and like other members of the radical faction including John Stuart Mill, was ready to abandon a cause which had once been so dear to his heart, largely on the grounds of party interest and advantage. The issue which had been key to exposing flaws in the Whig government in the 1830s was no longer relevant in the circumstances of the 1870s.<sup>53</sup>

### Political Economy and Philanthropy

Harriet's most important and influential theoretical work was based on philanthropy and political economy. Her pamphlet, *The Case of the Poor against the Rich* was published in 1850. This was influenced by her youthful discussions around the breakfast table with political economists such as James and John Stuart Mill but also with French philosophers and intellectuals such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Jean Baptiste Say, François Guizot, and Auguste Comte. Following her early political education by George, Harriet continued to keep extensive journals, or as she termed them, “roadbooks.” Here she recorded events and impressions and her thoughts on some of the great questions of the day.<sup>54</sup> Her headings in these notebooks give a taste of her eclectic interests: “our peculiar system of legislature—our faulty administration of justice—English, French and American politics—literature, art; education—farming—society, opera, the stage etc.” She was deeply interested in questions of labour and capital penning thoughts on overpopulation and under employment. In the 1820s she was in correspondence with Jean-Baptiste Say, who published widely on principles of commerce and economics, but the main influences for her pamphlet were de Tocqueville's *Memoir on Pauperism*, published after his tour of England in the late 1840s, and Léon Faucher's *Studies on England*. The pamphlet was,

52 Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote*, 312–3.

53 Bruce Kinzer, “J.S. Mill and the Secret Ballot,” *Historical Reflections* 5 (1978): 19–38.

54 Eastlake, *Mrs Grote*, 49.

in part, her response to Faucher's appeal to the conscience of the English to alleviate poverty. In her interpretation of the debate on pauperism, Grote was hostile to many facets of charitable practice. She concurred with those who argued that private benevolence, or those in the "Charity business," as she derisively termed it, frequently encouraged a culture of dependency among the poor, claiming that too much was being done for the poor by the rich, who felt guilty at their own wealth: "The care of the rich should be directed to the inculcation of sound principles of social economy" in order that the poor could help themselves. She viewed the education of the labouring classes as unwarranted and "death from poverty" as a necessary evil in the operation of natural laws. State intervention should be avoided. She attacked the elite, whom she termed "operative philanthropists," for resorting to private charity in an attempt to relieve the suffering of the poor, whilst in fact they were encouraging a culture of dependency. Her answer was not compulsory state action but the moral 'enlightening' of the lower classes, emigration and the limitation of births. In a typically forthright statement she wrote: "we have in vain listened for someone to tell the working classes that the secret of ameliorating their condition is to limit their numbers. Nobody will 'bell the cat'."<sup>55</sup> She argued against any attempt to interfere with property rights for the sake of abolishing poverty would be self-defeating. Every complaint against a fundamental principle of civil society had to be treated as an attack upon society itself. This view brought approval from de Tocqueville. However, even he thought that she had overstated the case and was not taking into account the transitions taking place in contemporary society:

I encounter in you work the good sense of the English economists, only sharpened and coloured by the intelligence and imagination of a woman, of which it is often in very great need. You defend the constituting principles on which our old European society rests, liberty and the individual responsibility that is its consequence, above all property. You are quite correct, you could not conceive of men living outside these primordial laws, nor could I. However, I confess to you, I often find that this old world, beyond which neither of us sees anything, seems quite used up; that this great and respectable machine is breaking down a little every day, and without understanding what might come to be, my confidence

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55 [Harriet Grote] A Mutual Friend, *The Case of the Poor Against the Rich Fairly Considered* (London: John Murray, 1850), especially 8–10.

in the duration of what is, is shaken . . . Who thus can affirm that one form of society is necessary and that another cannot exist?<sup>56</sup>

The pamphlet was well received. The scientist, Roderick Murchison, who with his wife, Charlotte, ran one of the foremost intellectual and political salons from their house in Belgrave Square, wrote of Harriet's special gift to "slay the giant of the day."<sup>57</sup> Sarah Austin, the writer and translator, noted that "the intrusive and obtrusive charity at present in vogue produces, as far as I can see, nothing but insatiable greed, discontent and envy, improvidence and hypocrisy."<sup>58</sup> Harriet Trelawny wife of the humanitarian MP, Sir John Trelawny vividly conveyed the enthusiasm which her work received from many politicians of the day. John had annotated the pamphlet with comments and interjections, and Harriet Trelawny wrote of his appreciation: "'Listen to this; here is God's truth for once!' 'This is *real* philanthropy!' 'A very refreshing article!'—and so forth . . ."<sup>59</sup>

Like many writers on philanthropy and political economy Grote elaborated her general perspectives with reference to her own community. Thus in the history of her neighbourhood, East Burnham, she took the opportunity to relate the experience of the local rural labourers to wider public debates on the position of the poor.<sup>60</sup> The Grotes had rented a cottage at East Burnham in 1838 whilst George wrote his *History of Greece*. Harriet fulfilled the duties of a country squire as George was occupied with his writing: she farmed the land, built cottages, and fought on behalf of the poorer commoners against the infringement of their rights by the lady of the manor.<sup>61</sup> She argued that justice should come before charity to the labourers of the parish. When she left East Burnham in 1851, she wrote, with little self-awareness, to a friend on the reaction of the poor in the district:

The farewell of my *humble* neighbours was, however, the most touching of all, and I could not but recognize the sincerity of feelings which, it was obvious, had no reference to future expectations. Poor cottagers!

56 Cited in Seymour Drescher, *Tocqueville in England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 146.

57 Grote, *Personal Papers*, 115.

58 Grote, *Personal Papers*, 150.

59 Grote, *Personal Papers*, 152.

60 [Harriet Grote] *Some Account of the Hamlet of East Burnham* (London: John Murray, 1858).

61 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, i, 383.

How much do your real virtues exceed the measure of praise generally awarded them. Knowing, as you do, my opinions as to the futility of *money* beneficence, I need hardly say that *my* relations with the “poor and needy” have cost me but a small outlay of that. But I have given them what they estimate as highly perhaps: attention, sympathy, counsel, and help in *stress*.<sup>62</sup>

She railed against the outlay of monetary contributions to the poor, berating one friend who she thought was too ready to bestow alms saying “‘Don’t be slopping out your money in charity—do some great thing.’” However, as Harriet’s biographer, Elizabeth Eastlake wryly noted, she, herself gave thousands of pounds to charity.<sup>63</sup>

### Foreign Affairs

Harriet had a fascination with European affairs from an early age, visiting Paris with her father in her teens. This remained an enduring motif throughout her life and she made some important contributions to international relations, particularly with France. The influence of French artists and intellectuals has already been noted in her published works on political economy and the biography of Ary Scheffer. However, her interests stretched far beyond France and she exploited every opportunity to engage in the world of international relations. In the nineteenth century the arena of diplomacy was characterised by what Elaine Chalus has termed “social politics” and therefore was an area ideal for colonisation by female politicians.<sup>64</sup> The very nature of its practice, based around informal contacts and behind the scenes activities, meant that women with connections were able to wield considerable influence. Harriet exploited her contacts with politicians and intellectuals in Britain and abroad. She travelled widely and coincidentally was present in France at the key flash-points of 1830, 1848 and 1851. In 1830, for example, she wrote to her siblings Thomas, Frances and Edward Lewin about the July Revolution:

Politics in France have become more interesting than any events in our own lives. . . . Of course we have been ‘au courant’ from the first. Letters

62 Eastlake, *Mrs Grote*, 70.

63 Eastlake, *Mrs Grote*, 71.

64 Elaine Chalus, “Elite Women, Social Politics and the Political World of Late Eighteenth-Century England,” *Historical Journal* 43 (2000): 669–97.

from Paris weekly of the best authority. The French newspapers we always take in, and we have also had some Parisians staying here, one of whom was the chief of that band who forced Notre Dame and planted the tricolor on its towers.<sup>65</sup>

The Grotes spent three days at La Grange, Lafayette's house near Méhun during May of 1830. They were thus able to witness at first hand the desire of the French people to overthrow the Bourbon monarchy. In her biography of Scheffer, Harriet noted, "in Paris, and at other places on our homeward route, the animation which we found everywhere prevailing on the subject of the elections attested the importance of the crisis. Wherever we stopped to change horses, the villagers—women as well as men—came flocking out to interrogate the postilion about the elections."<sup>66</sup> Harriet had close relationships with all the key liberal and radical intellectuals in mid-nineteenth-century France including Jean-Baptiste Say, Auguste Comte, Léon Faucher, Odillon Barrot, Alexis de Tocqueville, and François Guizot. These connections served her well, when in 1851 she found herself in Paris, as a spectator to the events which led to the rise of Louis Napoleon. On 2 December 1851 Louis Napoleon staged a coup d'état in order to dissolve the Constitution which prevented him becoming President for life. With the help of the military, opponents were imprisoned and deported, and popular rebellion was ruthlessly suppressed. Initial reaction in England to the coup was muted. The press and public opinion accepted explanations that Louis Napoleon had done little more than anticipate a surprise attack on his person engineered by the Legislative Assembly, and to avoid a lurch to the left in the planned 1852 elections. However, Harriet, who was visiting Paris at the time, was not content to allow Louis Napoleon and the military dictate their view of the events of 2 December unchallenged. Harriet was an acknowledged expert on foreign affairs in England and her unparalleled connections with leading French liberals meant that she spoke with an authoritative voice. The day after the coup, Harriet Grote visited the British Ambassador to Paris, the Marquis of Normanby, to use British influence to secure de Tocqueville's release from prison. She dryly noted in her diary, "I observed to the Marquis that the English Press had given Louis Napoleon great encouragement during the autumn." She also toured the streets of Paris at 11 o'clock at night (although accompanied by a servant) to view and to record the results of the riots for herself. After de Tocqueville's release on 5 December she met with him and smuggled out his account of the events leading up to the

65 Lewin, *The Lewin Letters*, i, 292–3.

66 Grote, *Memoir of the Life of Ary Scheffer*, 29–30.

coup.<sup>67</sup> The account was given to Henry Reeve who translated it and published it in the *Times* on 11 December, thus enabling de Tocqueville's defence of the Legislative Assembly and critique of Louis Napoleon to get wider currency.

British radicals acknowledged Harriet Grote's bravery and contribution to the public debate on French affairs. Joseph Parkes wrote to Harriet's husband, the writer and politician, George Grote who had stayed in England:

Tell Mrs Grote, and to whom enclose this letter (as I have scribbled it *for* her), that I have humbly done my best; and partly influenced by her generous and always true mind and pen, to denounce the Burglar and to defend the Chamber; and I have done some Press work here, and in the Provinces—besides influences.

Mrs Grote's month in Paris has been a year in her life; and she has the satisfaction of having done *much* good *here* for France and for English morality.<sup>68</sup>

However Harriet Grote's actions were not universally welcomed. In particular, members of the cabinet were not amused by a woman's interference in foreign affairs. For example, the Earl of Clarendon, soon to become foreign secretary, wrote to George Cornwall Lewis, "The *Times* is doing a vast deal of harm upon French affairs; but Reeve's virtuous indignation is not to be controlled; so, in order that he may please Guizot and the Grotesque [HG] and her dear Alexis (as she calls Tocqueville) a bad feeling is to be created between the two countries."<sup>69</sup> The views of politicians such as Clarendon were kept private and Harriet Grote, perhaps because of her connections, escaped public opprobrium. When she died in 1878 her obituaries in England and France acknowledged her wide contribution to political affairs in both countries.

Harriet was also active in lobbying successive governments on other foreign policy issues. For example, the Eastern Question interested her. She noted in 1877 that,

My own house has scarcely ever been empty [Lady Eastlake, Prof Bain, Henry Sidgewick etc.]... The *Quarterly Review* in person... Nothing is talked of here but two topics—the Eastern war, and French politics. Society is a good deal distracted between its two aversions—the merciless

67 BL Add. MSS 46,691, Harriet Grote's diary of events in Paris, December 1851.

68 Joseph Parkes to George Grote, 15 December 1851 published in Grote, *Posthumous Papers*, 120–1.

69 Drescher, *Tocqueville in England*, 174.



Turk, and the barbarian Russ—but I am inclined to think that the Turk is the least disliked of the two.<sup>70</sup>

She carried out an extensive correspondence with Austen Layard, ambassador to Constantinople in the 1870s, terming him, the “principal figure in Eastern Europe,” and ensuring that his communications on the question were widely disseminated among politicians at home. She also sought his views on Spain, China, India and Italy (among others). The world of diplomacy intrigued her and she adopted many of the tactics of an expert diplomat, seeking introductions to important English and foreign politicians, managing a lively and influential salon, and circulating correspondence. All these activities enabled her to interject her own strident opinions and views into a wider arena. Towards the end of her life she established a correspondence with Gladstone, drawing him into her personal networks of foreign politicians. In 1874 in a typical exchange with Gladstone, she wrote: “I received an interesting letter this morning from Paris—and it is very likely I may decide on handing it to you presently for perusal. It gives a statement concerning M. Guizot . . . I am excessively hurried today having had M. Wolowski [a French deputy] here for 1½ hours.”<sup>71</sup> Gladstone commiserated with her at having to entertain such a dull, if influential guest and requested further information.<sup>72</sup> Harriet Grote’s interventions in foreign affairs reveal the extent to which certain women could yield influence both at home and abroad.

### Conclusion

Harriet Grote died at her home in Shere, Surrey in 1878. An extensive *Times* obituary recorded her contribution:

Hers was a mind intended to lead and rule—decided, clear, judicial, proof against all sophistry, and open to all truth. Wherever she entered she left the impression of *superiority*, equally in modes of critical thought as in matters of common sense.<sup>73</sup>

In many ways she was unique. She had unparalleled political, intellectual and cultural contacts across Europe, especially in France. She was at the centre of

70 BL Add. MSS 39016/14, Harriet Grote to Austen Layard, October 14, 1877.

71 BL Add. MSS 44,443/178, Harriet Grote to William Ewart Gladstone, 28 April 1874.

72 BL Add. MSS 44,443/182, William Ewart Gladstone to Harriet Grote, 29 April 1874.

73 *Times*, 21 January 1879.

political life in England for over fifty years. She cultivated friendships, contacts, and networks that were to prove invaluable to radical politics in mid-Victorian England. She published a few modest pamphlets and books but her real contribution was in her private and semi-private communications: her road-books which she kept assiduously from her courting days; her correspondence; and her social activities which linked her to many of the leading public men and women of the day. In other ways, Harriet's life and work demonstrates the strategies and techniques open to many literate and well-connected middle-class women in the nineteenth century. The era was one of opportunity and inclusion rather than of a closing down of the public sphere to women. There were clearly limitations, and the Society of Female Artists illustrated some of the restrictions still present. But women, like Harriet, who wished to participate fully in the public, cultural and intellectual life of the nation, were clearly able to do so.

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## Grote's Athens: The Character of Democracy<sup>1</sup>

*James Kierstead*

The importance of Athens to the larger scheme of Grote's *History* is difficult to exaggerate. In his review of the work (and clearly under its influence), J.S. Mill described the whole sweep of Greek history as "an epic, of which Athens, as a collective personality, may be called the hero."<sup>2</sup> Less sympathetic readers were no less certain of the centrality of Athens to Grote's vision: for Eduard Meyer, for instance, Grote's work was "not a history but an *apologia* for Athens."<sup>3</sup> For all Grote's pervasive influence on later historians, it was his treatment of Athenian democracy that later scholars were forced to come to terms with, whether they liked it or not. In 1854, for example, even before the final volume of Grote's *History* had seen the light of day, the German scholar G.F. Schömann had already published an extensive monograph dedicated to Grote's views of the Athenian constitution.<sup>4</sup> Grote's influence on later historians was signalled partly by the prominence they accorded to the city of Cecrops, from De Sanctis' *Atthis* to Momigliano's insistence in 1952 that "Athens must remain the centre of a Greek history."<sup>5</sup>

That Grote's portrayal of Athens should still attract attention and controversy today is something of a paradox. Grote was, to say the least, working at a disadvantage in comparison with modern scholars, without the benefit

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1 I thank Kyriakos Demetriou for giving me the opportunity to write this essay; Josh Ober for discussing its argument with me and giving me feedback on part of an earlier draft; Giovanna Ceserani for sharing ideas and bibliography; and Ben Earley for saving me from several errors and suggesting a number of illuminating articles on the context of Grote's writing. At a late stage, Antis Loizides supplied a number of helpful corrections and notes to the sections on J.S. Mill. In what follows, unattributed translations from ancient authors are my own.

2 Quoted in M.L. Clarke, *George Grote: A Biography* (London: Athlone Press, 1962), 121.

3 *Ibid.*, 126.

4 G.F. Schömann, *Die Verfassungsgeschichte Athens nach George Grote's History of Greece*. Leipzig: Weidmann, 1854). Cf. A. Momigliano, *George Grote and the Study of Greek History* (London: University of London Press, 1952).

5 G. De Sanctis, *Atthis: storia della repubblica ateniese dalle origini alle riforme di Clistene* (Torino: Bocca, 1898). A. Momigliano, *George Grote and the Study of Greek History* (London: University of London Press, 1952), 19.

of a number of important literary texts (Menander),<sup>6</sup> inscriptions (mostly pertaining to the Empire),<sup>7</sup> and, most importantly, without any knowledge of the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*, pulled from the sands of Oxyrhynchus only in 1879 and first published by Kenyon twelve years later.<sup>8</sup> Of course, although beginners in Greek history are even in our day sometimes urged to “purchase ‘a Grote’ and to start reading it,”<sup>9</sup> and even though contemporary scholars

6 For the rediscovery of the first virtually complete play by this author, see e.g. E.W. Handley, *The Dyskolos of Menander* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1965), 40–55; the *editio princeps* is V. Martin, *Ménandre: Le Dyscolos* (Cologny-Genève: Bibliothèque Bodmer, 1958). For use of the play to shed light on Athenian history, see e.g. S. Lape, *Reproducing Athens: Menander's Comedy, Democratic Culture, and the Hellenistic City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

7 The large number of inscriptions not available to Grote includes those published as B.D. Meritt, H.T. Wade-Gery, M.F. McGregor, *The Athenian Tribute Lists* (4 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1939–53). The discovery and publication of epigraphic documents of this type was of course partly a product of the intensification of archaeological activity in the last century, e.g. the American excavations in the Agora from 1931 on; for a brief history of that project, see J.M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the Heart of Classical Athens* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970), 12–13.

8 For the rediscovery of the [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.*, see P.J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 1–5; the *editio princeps* is F.G. Kenyon, *On the Constitution of Athens* (London: British Museum, 1891). The importance of this text to modern understanding of Athenian democracy can scarcely be summarized here. But note that in one crucial matter, the centrality of the reforms of Cleisthenes, Grote's judgment has been validated by the Aristotelian treatise (see [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 21–23, and esp. 22.1–2); cf. W. Mitford, *The History of Greece* (10 vols. London: Cadell, 1784–1810/1822), 1.284. “In other words, at a point in time when the *Athenaion Politeion* of Aristotle had not yet been discovered, Grote comes to think of Cleisthenes... and to recognize him as the founder of the Athenian democracy” (C. Avlami, “From *Historia Magistra Vitae* to History as Empirical Experimentation of Progress,” in G. Klaniczay, M. Werner and O. Gecser, eds. *Multiple Antiquities—Multiple Modernities: Ancient Histories in Nineteenth Century European Cultures* [Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2011], 157). Cleisthenes' role in the coming of the democracy is, of course, given some emphasis in Herodotus, 5.66–80. For more on the importance of Cleisthenes' reforms to Grote and to contemporary ancient historians, see Part 3 of this essay, below.

For these categories of evidence, cf. Momigliano, *George Grote and the Study of Greek History*, 15: since Grote's day “Menander can speak for himself, the study of Athenian constitutional history has been transformed by the discovery of the *Atheniensium res publica*, and the history of the Athenian Empire has been made possible by inscriptions.”

9 “I had been told at the age of nineteen by my Harvard teacher, Sterling Dow, to purchase ‘a Grote’ and to start reading it. Good advice that I followed”: Calder in the Preface (ix) to W.M. Calder and S. Trzaskoma, eds. *George Grote Reconsidered: A 200th Birthday Celebration with a First Edition of his Essay “Of the Athenian Government”* (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1996).

(especially in England) occasionally insist that Grote's analysis of some aspect of Athenian society is "still well worth reading,"<sup>10</sup> on the whole it is impossible to deny that we read Grote today (if at all) as an exercise in intellectual history, in classical reception, and not as a reliable guide to historical realities.

Peculiarly enough, that we view Grote in this way would not have surprised his nineteenth-century critics. It quickly became a commonplace of critical readings of Grote that his Greeks are "no more than disguised Englishman from the middle of the nineteenth century," to use the words of Julius Beloch.<sup>11</sup> This allegation has remained a staple of Grote criticism ever since, from E.H. Carr's 1961 remark in passing that Grote's *History* tells us more about English Philosophical Radicals in the 1840s than it does about the ancient Greeks, to Tritle's recent (1999) re-statement of the claim in nearly identical terms (Grote's *History* "tells us more about the Victorian George Grote and Philosophic Radicalism than Athens in the fourth century BC").<sup>12</sup>

Grote himself, needless to say, would have rejected this allegation in vigorous terms. It was, in fact, one of his main complaints against earlier historians that they failed to enter into the ancient way of seeing things, which led to predictable errors of evaluative judgment. Moderns found it difficult to comprehend the revulsion the Athenians felt at the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries but their revulsion was in fact (Grote insisted) quite understandable.<sup>13</sup> Grote's royalist predecessor Mitford, when writing about the archaic tyrants, could see only the constitutional monarchs of nineteenth-century Europe. But as Grote

10 "Grote's perceptive analysis of the Athenian judicial system is still well worth reading": S.C. Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 156 n. 12.

11 Quoted in M. Chambers, "Grote's History of Greece," in Calder and Trzaskoma, *George Grote Reconsidered*, 19.

12 For Carr's remark, see L. Tritle, "The Athens of George Grote: Historiography and Philosophic Radicalism," in R. Mellor, and L. Tritle, eds. *Text and Tradition: Studies in Greek History and Historiography in Honor of Mortimer Chambers* (Claremont, CA: Regina, 1999), 368; for Tritle's re-statement, 376. Though most readers have assimilated Grote's Athens to Victorian England, one at least saw in it a reflection of revolutionary France. For Prosper Mérimée, writing in the May 1850 edition of the *Revue de deux Mondes*, the "little Athenian republic" was comparable to the "great French republic," quoted in Avlami, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae* . . ." 155; cf. also J.T. Roberts, *Athens on Trial: The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 248–9.

13 G. Grote, *A History of Greece* (12 vols. London: Dent, 1846–56/1907), vol. 7, 247, where readers are encouraged, for comparative purposes, to imagine what would have happened in a contemporary Catholic country "if instead of the Eleusinian mysteries we suppose the Sacrifice of the Mass to have been the ceremony ridiculed." See further 7.247–50, esp. the long notes on 248 and 250; and Part 3 of this essay, below.



reminded readers of the *Westminster Review*, the Greeks “felt towards kings only fear and hatred,” a feeling “we cannot construe or criticize . . . by reference to the feelings of modern Europe, still less to the very peculiar feelings of England, respecting kingship.” “It is this application,” Grote concludes, “sometimes explicit and sometimes tacit, of this unsuitable standard, which renders Mr. Mitford’s appreciation of Greek politics so often incorrect and unfair.”<sup>14</sup>

Critics of Grote such as Tritle who consider that his “image of Athens” is “barely disguised as London”<sup>15</sup> are paying insufficient attention not only to his scrupulous employment of the critical method in handling sources, but also to those leaps of imaginative sympathy by which an atheist utilitarian was able to enter into the religious sympathies of the Athenians in a way which had eluded even his explicitly Christian predecessors. They are also ignoring the way in which Grote’s democratic inclinations arguably put him in a better position to understand the workings of ancient democratic city-states than the more orthodox political creeds of many of his contemporaries. That Grote’s view of Athens was partly a result of his own milieu in liberal London is undeniable; that this resulted in a distortion of the real nature of Athenian democracy is more difficult to prove.<sup>16</sup>

Grote’s Athens was a genuinely revolutionary one. It overturned almost at a stroke the image of an idle and fickle, and yet at the same time aggressively oppressive, ochlocracy that had been built up over centuries by a derisive (and surely defensive) scholarly elite. It rescued the sophists and demagogues from the retrospective contempt in which they had been held for much of subsequent history, and restored them to a more credible place as ordinary (even

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14 Quoted in K.N. Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy: A Study in Classical Reception* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1999), 86.

15 Tritle “The Athens of George Grote”; for the quotation, 376.

16 In other words, evaluation of a historical work must depend primarily on an assessment of the accuracy of its historical claims. A historian’s ethical or political views (however loudly proclaimed) or intellectual context (however fascinating or distasteful) are, strictly speaking, irrelevant to this assessment. P.J. Rhodes, *Ancient Democracy and Modern Ideology* (London: Duckworth, 2003), 8, predicts that “although total objectivity and disengagement are not and never have been possible, scholars who aspire to objectivity and disengagement are likely to do better history.” But objectivity and disengagement do not necessarily go hand in hand; there is, of course, always a danger that scholars who profess to be disengaged have their objectivity compromised by prejudices that remain unacknowledged. Grote certainly did not hide his democratic sympathies; whether these sympathies led to error and misrepresentation in his account of classical Athens is for every reader to judge.

valuable) intellectuals and politicians. More importantly, it decisively and irrevocably displaced Sparta as the would-be constitutional engineers' utopia of choice, placing ancient and modern democrats in a single lineage for the first time, and transforming Athens from a conservative bugbear to an argumentative resource for liberals.<sup>17</sup>

Grote's *History* achieved all this partly because, and not in spite of, its similarly revolutionary distrust of the sources, its careful weighing of evidence, and its exhaustive scope. And yet the observation that Grote's *History* now has value for us mainly as a document of the time in which its author wrote is no less true than before. In what follows, I aim to fulfill two tasks. The first is to retell the familiar story of George Grote's revolutionary rewriting of Athenian history against the background of his intellectual context, the development of his own thinking, and with a view to his considerable influence on the development of a liberal theory of democracy.<sup>18</sup> The second is to refine our understanding of

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17 The task of displacing Sparta had admittedly already been attempted in France; for more on this point, see below, n. 56.

18 Although Grote's *History* is in many ways thoroughly Whiggish, one of the reasons the work was so significant was that it disrupted earlier liberal narrative of progress. From Grote onwards, it could no longer be complacently assumed that modern representative systems stood at the end of centuries of uninterrupted improvement. Greek history henceforth presents an opportunity not only for liberal self-congratulation, but for radical criticism of current forms of "democratic" governance. On such points, Grote's successor Louis Ménard was more explicit (and more radical): "La valeur des idées ne dépend pas de leur date, et la vérité n'est pas une question d'almanach . . . Cessons donc de proscrire les forms que l'antiquité a données à ses institutions et de faire dater de notre siècle l'avènement des lumières" (quoted in Avlami, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae* . . .," 159). For more on Ménard, see Part 4 of this paper, below. For complacently progressivist narratives by earlier liberal writers, see e.g. N. de Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (Paris: Dubuisson, 1795/1864); with N. Loraux and P. Vidal-Naquet, "La formation de l'Athènes bourgeoise: essai d'historiographie 1750–1870," in R.R. Bolgar, ed. *Classical Influences on Western Thought, A.D. 1650–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 169–222; and Avlami, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae* . . ." 143–5.

It was, of course, the view of James Madison that the modern American republic would constitute an advance over the democracies of old; see e.g. J. Madison, A. Hamilton, and J. Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Penguin, 1788/1987), #10 (representative government controls the dangers of factionalism), and #14 (representative government allows for greater scale in a polity). This view depended largely on a uncharitable reading of Greek history, in which Athenian history specifically is a catalogue of failures (for Madison's ancient history, see e.g. #28). It is arguable that with a different account of Greek history, Madison would have been less anxious to protect his constitution from

the ways in which Grote's work can accurately be seen as a product of its time: not in its distortion of historical realities due to liberal democratic bias, but in its surprising retention, in the interpretation of those realities, of a number of peculiarly Victorian ideas, chief among them the notion of character.

Grote's Athenians, as we shall see, are undoubtedly democrats; but they are meant to earn our respect and our attention mainly because of the good character which democratic institutions instilled in them. I begin with a brief account of the background of Grote's *History*, both in terms of his own thought and of the thinking of his age more generally. I then move on to define and defend my claims about the presence of the Victorian notion of character in Grote's work; this informs the next section, which details the main ways in which Grote's Athens was a revolutionary one. I close with a brief discussion of the *Nachleben* of Grote's Athens, and of the significant impact of Grote's notion of character on the democratic theory of the historian's ally, John Stuart Mill.<sup>19</sup>

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the apparent dangers of what he termed "pure democracy." That aside, to the extent that Grote overturned a negative view of Athens, he limited the rhetorical options of those who wanted to argue that the mixed constitution was a simple improvement on, and not a dilution of, ancient direct democracy.

- 19 It is certainly not my intention here to obscure what is most important about Grote's achievement. This is, beyond doubt, that he overturned the conventional wisdom about Athens. I also believe that his substantive view of Athens as a strong state which enjoyed real popular rule is correct; on the first point, see e.g. J. Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), Chapter 2, "Performance"; on the second, J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). But the story of Grote's transformation of our view of Athens is one that has been told many times (by e.g. Roberts, *Athens on Trial*; Chambers, "George Grote's History of Greece"; Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy*; and cf. Avlami 2011, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae* . . .," 156: "Many have rightly emphasized [the opposition between Grote's views and those of his anti-democratic predecessors]"). The purpose of this essay is to draw attention to the centrality of moral character in Grote's understanding of democracy. It is partly an exercise in intellectual history, which demands an accurate reconstruction of past systems of thought, however much we may want to dispense with certain aspects of them. But it is partly also an invitation to democratic theorists, to see whether there might be something in Grote's view of the recursive interaction between character and institutions that is worth salvaging. For a recent reading of Athenian politics along these lines, see R.K. Balot, "Virtue Politics in Democratic Athens," in S. Salkever, *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 271–300.

## 1 Grote's Athens in Its Context

The revolutionary nature of Grote's Athens, as well as the centrality of character to the debates of his time, can only be understood in their intellectual context. Athens before Grote was, more often than not, an exemplar of all that was wrong with the idea of democracy, and a warning to those who would seek to revive it. The long and venerable tradition of anti-democratic ancient history, entertainingly recounted by Roberts, had recently received fresh impetus in the form of a number of substantial English-language works that began to appear in the eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> In 1774 the Anglo-Irish playwright and man of letters Oliver Goldsmith published his *History of Greece*, a history that differed little from Temple Stanyan's uncritical rehashing of his sources (most slavishly Plutarch) in his *Grecian History* of the 1740s. In 1786 the Scottish court historian John Gillies composed an explicitly monarchical and anti-democratic dedication to the King for his own *History of Ancient Greece*:

The history of Greece exposes the dangerous turbulence of democracy, and arraigns the despotism of tyrants. By describing the incurable evils inherent in every form of Republican policy, it evinces the inestimable benefits resulting to liberty itself from the lawful dominion of hereditary kings, and the steady operation of well-regulated monarchy.<sup>21</sup>

By far the most influential of these works was William Mitford's *History of Greece from the Earliest Period*, published in ten volumes between 1784 and

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20 Partly for reasons of space, and partly because one of the burdens of this essay is the peculiar Englishness of Grote's *History*, I cannot engage in any lengthy discussion of the French reception of Athenian democracy in this period. For the French context, see Avlami, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae*..." and esp. the influential paper of Loraux and Vidal-Naquet, "La formation de l'Athènes bourgeoise," where the multiple French liberal perspectives on Athens are distinguished and traced. The multiple perspectives included (at least) visions of a mercantile, a liberal, and a more specifically democratic Athens. Various combinations of these aspects of Athens were proposed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, but the mercantile, liberal, and democratic versions of the city-state were frequently in tension, not least in the thinking of Constant (on which see *ibid.*, 209–16). In this context, Grote's Athens can be seen as an assertion that Athens was mercantile, liberal, and (above all) democratic all at once.

21 J. Gillies, *The History of Ancient Greece, its Colonies, and Conquests, from the Earliest Accounts till the Division of the Macedonian Empire in the East* (Part 1. 2 vols. Basel: Tourneisen, 1786/1790), I.iii.

1810. Mitford's work stood out from the crowd for many of the same reasons that Grote's was to later: careful weighing of sources, attentiveness to detail, and monumental scale. Mitford's *History*, like that of Grote, also had the advantage, from a literary perspective, of being organized around and shaped by a clear and unrelenting philosophical thrust: in Mitford's case, the exposing of what he called "the inherent weakness and the indelible barbarism of democratic government." The poet Byron, Mitford's contemporary, ably summarizes the historian's virtues (and vices):

His great pleasure consists in praising tyrants, abusing Plutarch, spelling oddly, and writing quaintly; and what is strange, after all, *his* is the best modern history of ancient Greece in any language, and he is perhaps the best of all modern historians whatsoever. Having named his sins, it is but fair to state his virtues: labour, learning, research, wrath, and partiality. I call the latter virtues in a writer, because they make him write in earnest.<sup>22</sup>

Mitford's virtues were considerable enough that James Mill would later give his *History* to his son John, for lack of anything better, albeit with a warning against the author's "blackening of popular institutions."<sup>23</sup>

As for his vices, these are usually said to be the mirror-image of those imputed to Grote: undue eagerness to press the monarchist case. Anyone who reads the final third of Grote's review of Clinton's *Fasti Hellenici* in the *Westminster Review*, in which he systematically dismantles Mitford's narrative of Philip of Macedon by focusing in on a number of mistranslations and unjustified inferences from the relevant Greek texts, may have their doubts that partiality is the worst charge that can be laid at Mitford's door. But that partiality is in any case understandable. Like his fellow parliamentarian Edmund Burke, Mitford was a man profoundly influenced (and profoundly shaken) by the French Revolution. Like Burke, he was a man of conservative instincts compelled by events to find or build more secure foundations for his political creed. While Burke located those foundations in a kind of philosophy of institutional history, Mitford found them in Greek history, and his writings on the subject were explicitly designed to prevent England from following the path followed by France (or, worst of all, Athens).<sup>24</sup>

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22 Byron's own note on the last two lines of Canto 12 of *Don Juan*: "And Mitford! in the nineteenth century/ gives, with Greek truth, the good old Greek [= Plutarch] the lie."

23 Quoted in Roberts, *Athens on Trial*, 247.

24 It hardly needs to be pointed out that Mitford and Burke were in many respects quite different, not least in that the latter was a professed Whig (although he has of course been

England, of course, was in Mitford's day not as badly run as Athens. In England, after all, the democratic element in the constitution was "more wisely given, and more wisely bounded, notwithstanding some defects, than in any other government that ever existed."<sup>25</sup> At the same time, there were signs that things might be taking a turn for the worse, and the mob rule of the Athenians could not be considered entirely "strange among ourselves, where country meetings, too frequently, and the common hall of London, continually exhibit perfect examples of that tyranny of a multitude" that was characteristic of Athens.<sup>26</sup> To help make sure things did not get out of hand, Mitford wrote a Greek history that was, more than anything else, a display case for the vices of the Athenians. Even such ostensibly inoffensive acts as the request of some Athenian prisoners to Philip for clothes in which they could return home were promptly denounced by Mitford as evidence of "the arrogance and levity of the Athenian Many in that Age."<sup>27</sup>

Mitford's case against Athens, it turns out, depends in large part on the character of its democratic citizens. This, as we shall see, would become one of the chief elements in Mitford's picture of Athens that Grote would seek to overturn. But it was also crucial to the Whiggish rearguard action that followed the publication of Mitford's *History*. Thomas Babington Macaulay, in his 1824 review of Mitford in the *Knight's Quarterly*, criticized the Tory (as Grote would later) for anachronism in inferring from the suitability of constitutional monarchy to modern Britons that it would have been equally suitable for ancient Athenians. A good government, insists Macaulay,

like a good coat, is that which fits the body for which it is designed. A man who, upon abstract principles, pronounces a constitution to be good, without an exact knowledge of the people who are to be governed by it, judges as absurdly as a tailor who should measure the Belvidere Apollo for the clothes of all his customers. The demagogues who wished to see Portugal a republic, and the wise critics who revile the Virginians for not having instituted a peerage, appear equally ridiculous to all men of sense and candour.<sup>28</sup>

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taken up as a foundational figure by modern conservatives). For similarities between Burke's views on national character and those of Grote, see below, n. 28.

25 Mitford, *History of Greece*, 1.278.

26 Ibid., 9.74.

27 Ibid., 8.392 with Roberts, *Athens on Trial*, 204.

28 Quoted in Roberts, *Athens on Trial*, 236. For Grote's use of this idea, see Part 2 of this chapter, below. The genesis of this idea in Grote's mind seems not to have been due

As other passages in his review make clear, Macaulay is nonetheless certain that democracy (in its British form) is the highest form of political organization known to man. But certain peoples are not yet ready for it, and in the work of the constitutional designer the development of citizen character and the introduction of democratic institutions must go hand in hand.

As Macaulay's review of Mitford in the *Knight's Quarterly* attests, the debate over Greek history, far from being confined to the academy, was the subject

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specifically to Macaulay. Rather, it seems to have been a staple of liberal ideology in this period. This is suggested by its presence in the thought not only of Grote, Macaulay, and Mill (on which see the final section below) but also in that of Burke. As Grote himself points out, Burke "in his speeches at the beginning of the American war" distinguished "between the principles of government proper to be followed by England in the American colonies, and in British India" (Grote, *History of Greece*, 12.192).

Grote makes this remark in the context of a discussion of the influence of the ideas of Aristotle on Alexander's policy in the East (for a more recent discussion along similar lines, see J. Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998; Chapter 6, "Political Animals, Actual Citizens, and the Best Possible *Polis*: Aristotle *Politics*"). In Grote's reading, Aristotle effectively advised Alexander to prescribe different forms of government to Greeks and barbarians, by behaving "to the Greeks as a leader or president, or limited chief—and to the barbarians (non-Hellenes) as a master" (Grote *History of Greece*, 12.191). That he failed to implement this advice was due, in Grote's view, to Alexander's "temper and character, as modified by a few years of conquest" (192). In other words, the institutional setting into which Alexander thrust himself (absolute monarchy) undermined his character, which meant that he was unable effectively to prescribe different institutional settings to Greeks and non-Greeks. The effects in terms of the long-term survival of Alexander's empire were, of course, ruinous. Here the British reader might have been reminded of the supposedly superior policy of his own empire in which (at least in theory) different peoples were ruled in different ways.

That Grote and Burke meet at this point of Whiggish ideology is all the more striking for the contrast in their views of Athenian democracy. Cf. e.g. E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Penguin, 1790/1969), 139: "No rotation; no appointment by lot; no mode of election operating in the spirit of sortation or rotation, can be generally good in a government conversant in extensive objects"; and 228–9 (quoting Aristotle *Pol.* 4.4 to the effect that in democracy and tyranny, "the ethical character is the same"—Burke's rendering of τὸ ἠθικὸν τὸ αὐτὸν). For examples of Burke's positive views on character and institutions in his own words, see e.g. 203, "the world on the whole will gain by liberty, without which virtue cannot exist"; and his letter to Claremont of August 9th 1789: the spirit of the French revolution may be due to "character rather than accident," and "men must have a certain fund of moderation to qualify them for Freedom else it becomes noxious to themselves and a perfect nuisance to every body else" (quoted in O'Brien's Introduction to Burke, *Reflections*, 13–4).



of lively controversy in the pages of a number of literary reviews read widely among the educated public. One paper that deserves mention beside the *Knight's Quarterly* is the *Edinburgh Review*, first published in 1802; but the two journals which engaged most earnestly in the argument about the Greek past were the conservative *Quarterly Review* (which came into existence in 1809) and its nemesis, *The Westminster Review*, the organ of the Philosophical Radicals (which began being printed in 1824). Both journals sought unashamedly to appropriate Greek history to their own contemporary political ends, and in the battle to secure their ground they took no prisoners (partly because writing in both reviews was often unsigned). The author of a review of a new edition of Demosthenes by Planche decided to employ the occasion to denounce the vapidness of the Attic orators in terms that he felt sure would appeal to an English audience: Athenian oratory, he asserted, was in its blend of cunning and deceitfulness comparable only to "the learning of the Popish doctors."<sup>29</sup> The *Westminster Review* soon hit back, complaining that the reviewer treated human flaws that appeared in all societies as if they were the exclusive preserve of Athenian democrats:

We might as well blame the men of Athens for permitting the tooth-ache to torture their argumentative mouths, and allege in accusation, that when any of these detestable democrats, who was not accustomed to the sea, went on board ship, he basely suffered himself to be afflicted with a most distressing sickness; the countryman of Pericles turned pale and lost his appetite, and the hateful slave of the worst of tyrannies, a mobocracy . . . was thoroughly uncomfortable.<sup>30</sup>

The tone is facetious, but the argument is one that Grote would employ with some frequency against those who would blame all the ills of Athenian history upon its form of government.

The world of the London reviews—in which history and politics, scholarship and conviction met—was very much Grote's world. Although he had the benefit of a classical education at Charterhouse, Grote never went to university (his later appointment as Chancellor of the University of London is something of a historical irony). Instead, he worked long hours at his family bank on Threadneedle Street in the City of London until his father's death in 1830. Even though he was by that time already deep into his *History of Greece*

29 *QR* 27 (1822): 382–404; passages from literary reviews are as quoted in Roberts, *Athens on Trial*, 231–8.

30 *WR* 3 (1825): 233–5.

(begun in 1823), Grote did not take up the opportunity his father's death might have presented of transitioning into a life of learned leisure. Instead, he became actively involved in politics, publishing a tract on the *Essentials of Parliamentary Reform* shortly before the passage of First Reform Bill in 1832. In December of 1831, Grote was elected to parliament.<sup>31</sup>

Grote's Athens is rightly seen as a product of his distinctive experience as a financier and politician. But we should be careful not to be too mechanical in our thinking about how Grote's professional career shaped his scholarly work. We might justly question the many assertions by Grote's critics that his Athens resembles London; for example, despite all his experience as a banker, there is surprisingly little in Grote's *History* about finance and economics.<sup>32</sup> His Athens is not therefore to be dismissed as anachronistic simply because its author

31 See the entry on Grote in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 23.287.

32 Explicit comparison of Athens and London (even England) is not frequent in Grote's work; it is, of course, among the central arguments of this essay that when such comparisons do occur, they tend to focus not on mercantilism or finance but on moral character. Such comparisons are also often accompanied by extensive discussions of other European cultures, esp. France and the United States. Moreover, assertions that Athens and England were more or less the same are thin on the ground; though Grote does sometimes depict Athens as a more radical version of England. A good test-case of his comparative approach is to be found in his discussion of the Athenian *dikastêria* in comparison with European jury-courts (6.24–45—most of the comparative material is contained in a series of enormous footnotes). Among other legal cultures, Grote considers the French system (32, n. 2) as well as the American (34, n. 1). His conclusion is that “the dikast trial at Athens effected the same object, and had in it only the same ingredients of error and misdecision, as the English jury: but it had them in stronger doses” (38).

Whether Grote's *History* contains implicit comparisons with London is a matter of interpretation. But given the paucity of explicit comparisons, it may be wondered why Grote's critics have insisted so strongly on this eminently debatable point. To the extent that Grote's Athens is mercantile (it is not, in my view, overwhelmingly so), critics might accuse Grote of anachronism only granted the premise that classical Athens had no independent economic sphere. But this is itself a claim that needs to be argued rather than assumed. In other words, Grote's Athens is only unduly London-like if we assume that mercantilism was something that could only have been imposed on Athens from the outside, rather than simply being a feature of the ancient city. For a long time, the Finleyite paradigm in the study of ancient economics insisted that an independent economic sphere was indeed absent from ancient Greece; but in recent years this paradigm has effectively collapsed under the pressure of both empirical and theoretical considerations. For the Finleyite paradigm see e.g. M.I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); P. Millett, *Lending and Borrowing in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and for its collapse, see e.g. I. Morris, “The Athenian Economy Twenty Years after *The Ancient Economy*,” *Classical Philology* 89 (1994): 351–366;

was a man of his own, very different time. On the contrary, Grote was able to produce a revolutionary account of Athens precisely because his education had been so different to that of the majority of the academic historians of his period. Grote's great advantage was that he was able to look at the past from a perspective that was entirely free of the deadening influence of the ancient seats of English learning, where donnish wisdom had long made up its mind on the character of the jurymen who had made Socrates drink hemlock.

What advanced education Grote had he received from personal acquaintances. Grote first met James Mill in 1819, at the age of twenty-five; his reverence for the philosopher was life-long.<sup>33</sup> Grote's first significant literary intervention, his 1822 *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*, was written at the request of Jeremy Bentham, from four volumes of notes that the utilitarian had himself compiled. The atheism that Grote espoused in this early work was a matter of deep personal conviction: in personal letters from this period, we can observe Grote in act of guiding his sister-in-law, Frances Lewin, away from her ancestral faith.<sup>34</sup> The place in Grote's life that might have been filled by religion was filled instead by his zeal for utilitarianism, which a friend described (in a letter to J.S. Mill) as "a belief... most deep and conscientious, for which he chiefly lives, and for which he would die."<sup>35</sup>

Grote's association with John Stuart Mill seems, in the beginning at any rate, to have been more of an intellectual partnership than a spontaneous friendship; and Mill expresses some reservations about Grote in an extant letter to Carlyle.<sup>36</sup> Nadia Urbinati in her book on Mill has laid particular emphasis on Mill's rejection of Benjamin Constant's earlier distinction between the

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I. Morris and J.G. Manning, "Introduction," in Morris and Manning, eds. *The Ancient Economy: Evidence and Models* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1–44.

33 For Grote's reverence for James Mill, see his review of the younger Mill's *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, *WR* 29 (1866): 1–39, which includes a lengthy encomium of the elder Mill, paying particular attention to his qualities as a historian ("Mr John Stuart Mill has not been the first to bestow honour on the surname which he bears. His father, Mr James Mill, had already ennobled the name. An ampler title to distinction in history and philosophy can seldom be produced than that which Mr James Mill left behind him...")

34 See e.g. the letters quoted in Chambers, "Grote's History of Greece," 4–6.

35 H.S.R. Elliot, *The Letters of John Stuart Mill* (2 vols. London: Longmans, 1910), #58.

36 Grote "is a man of good, but not first-rate intellect, hard and mechanical, not at all quick; with less subtlety than any able and instructed man I ever knew... After all I had said of him you will be surprised to learn that he reads German." Quoted in Momigliano, "George Grote and the Study of Greek History," 11.

liberties of the ancients and those of the moderns. For Mill, participation in democratic institutions and protections against domination were part of the same package, and this is undoubtedly an idea that Grote would have had no hesitation in sanctioning. But we might quibble with Urbinati's occasional tendency to magnify Mill's contribution to our view of Athens almost to the exclusion of Grote. "Mill had the political intelligence," she writes "to free the only democracy in Western history from scholarly discredit and to vindicate its superiority"; though she elsewhere gives Grote more credit, it may be worth pointing out that it was less Mill's political intelligence that secured that particular result as Grote's scholarly industry.<sup>37</sup> In the last section of this essay, we will pick up the story of Grote's influence on the younger Mill, and it will be enough at this stage to note that Grote's *History* (1846–56) was already complete when Mill published his great essays *On Liberty* (1859) and *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861).

Grote's thinking, then, developed through personal conversation and correspondence rather than formal education, was designed to fulfill political purposes rather than academic requirements, and had an influence far beyond the universities (although it certainly had an impact there). One way of tracing its development before he embarked upon his grand historical project is to read the charming series of letters he exchanged with his sister-in-law, sister-in-law (which I mentioned above). In these, the political is constantly found to be implicit in the personal. A letter dated to January 27th, 1823, ostensibly concerning a trip to France, contains one of the more direct arguments for democracy to be found in Grote's writings:

No one ever concluded that the people make no mistakes; what is contended is, that the people are *right upon the long run*—right more frequently than they are wrong—and above all, that they have no *interest in going wrong*; consequently that it is possible to point out their errors, and that whoever does so, will secure their esteem. Whereas an irresponsible one, or an irresponsible few have a *permanent and incurable interest* in plundering and depressing the people in order to gratify their own appetites for wealth and power, and therefore however wise *they*

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37 N. Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5. Mill's ability to integrate a novel view of Athens into liberal theory and to present it to a broad audience should certainly not be underestimated. But the central task of reassessing Athenian history was an essentially empirical one, and it was Grote who carried it out.

may be, their wisdom will never be applied to the benefit, but to the injury of the people.<sup>38</sup>

Grote's argument here demonstrates that even at this early stage, his belief in democracy is founded on an analysis of the various incentives that operate on individuals in different political systems. To this extent, his thinking shares in the perspectives of contemporary utilitarianism.

But by this time Grote was already taking his first steps as a historian, and direct insight into the development of his thought on the classical Athenians is now readily available in the form of a previously unpublished 1821 essay "Of the Athenian Government" recently printed by Calder and Trzaskoma. Written when Grote was only 27, the essay must come as a crushing disappointment to admirers of the historian's later production. It displays an unsteady grasp of primary sources (the piece depends almost entirely upon Demosthenes, with Aeschines the only other orator cited—and that only once), as well as a complete lack of critical distance from the authors he does cite (so Demosthenes' denunciations of the Athenians for their sluggishness is taken unquestioningly as evidence that the Athenians were, in fact, remarkably slow to act). To read the essay in conjunction with those parts of the *History* that cover the same time period is to be made painfully aware of the benefit of a decade of immersion in the primary evidence. "By the 1840s" as Calder and Trzaskoma say, "Grote's thorough knowledge of the sources and his mature historical sense are a world away from the a priori theorizing of 1821."<sup>39</sup>

Even more surprising than the shoddiness of the essay as a piece of historiography is that Grote seems to accept some of the main charges of the anti-Athenian school that he was later to challenge so successfully. Grote uncritically accepts Demosthenes' allegation that Athens is run by cabals that he compares to symmories (an institution meant to ensure the payment of certain taxes), and immediately concludes that "this aristocracy [the symmories] completely governed the decision of the popular assemblies."<sup>40</sup> These assemblies were in

38 Quoted in Chambers, "Grote's History of Greece," 5.

39 W.M. Calder and S. Trzaskoma, eds. *George Grote Reconsidered: A 200th Birthday Celebration with a First Edition of his Essay "Of the Athenian Government"* (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1996), 78.

40 For the comparison, Dem. 2.29. The criticism Demosthenes is offering here is that the Athenians are dominated in their politics by their leaders, just as the members of symmories are dominated by their leaders. Symmories represented a sort of tax-farming in which wealthy citizens paid sums of money to the state and then sought to re-coup their expenses from other citizens. For Demosthenes, each of Athens' political symmories is dominated by an orator and a general just as each naval

any case “extremely quarrelsome and impatient” and “scarcely anything like an argument urged against this administration [again the symmories] was tolerated.” Moreover

The people were deluded by all imaginable means. Venal orators were hired to flatter and cajole them, trifling offences were exaggerated into the most alarming magnitude, and presented to their attention in frightful colours; when their expectations were disappointed in any public affair, the officer to whom it had been entrusted was thrust forward as the victim of their fury, though himself perhaps blameless.<sup>41</sup>

What seems to be happening here is that Grote is making an early attempt to rebut one of the main tenets of the anti-Athenian school of historiography: that there was in Athens a tyranny of the majority that oppressed the rich. He goes about doing so with a two-pronged argument: not only were the rich always in charge of the people; but the people themselves were utterly unable to organize themselves for successful action. In view of these two facts, there was no way that the people of Athens could have successfully tyrannized a minority of worthy notables.

Grote will later criticize Mitford for wanting to have it both ways, by accusing the Athenians of being both efficiently tyrannical and completely incompetent. In this early essay, Grote is in effect embracing the second option as a way of avoiding the first. But this decision comes at quite a cost, since the Athens that emerges from the first part of the essay is hardly one that would serve as an inspiration or paradigm for democratic reform. “When [the Athenian people] did decree anything,” Grote assures us (on the sole authority of Demosthenes) “it very frequently remained undone, and their orders wholly disregarded.”<sup>42</sup> Hardly a system that fills one with confidence, but the depiction is meant to reassure the nervous aristocrat: “When from any sudden mistrust or panic, the assembly were prevailed upon to pass a vote inimical to the aristocracy,

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symmory is dominated by a chairman (ἡγέμων) and director (ἐπιμελετής). On the actual (naval) symmories, see first M.H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Nelson: Oklahoma University Press, 1991), 113–4; and further e.g. E. Ruschenbusch, “Die athenischen Symmorien des 4. Jh. v. Chr.,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 31 (1978): 275–284; P.J. “Problems in Athenian *Eisphora* and Liturgies,” *American Journal of Ancient History* 7 (1982): 1–19.

41 G. Grote, “Of the Athenian Government,” in Calder and Trzaskoma, *George Grote Reconsidered*, 84.

42 Ibid., 86.

the measure was never realized.”<sup>43</sup> Members of the elite had nothing to fear from democracy: the example of classical Athens shows this.

Grote begins to find his feet, and the confidently pro-Athenian voice we associate with him, only near the end of his essay, when he turns from Demosthenes to the words of the writer we now know as the Old Oligarch. “From the mouth of this hostile witness,” Grote suddenly proclaims, “evidence may be deduced, proving incontestably that the Athenian Government was the best at that time existing in Greece.”<sup>44</sup> This evidence turns out to hang upon the Old Oligarch’s grudging admiration for how the Athenian democracy was run, despite his belief that it was operated by the villainous for dastardly ends. Grote concludes that in Athens, “the poor, though they remained poor and did not invade the property of the rich, yet they were better secured against the inroads of the latter than in any other Grecian state.”<sup>45</sup>

Though the conclusion may not in fact stray too far from historical realities, it represents a difficult balancing act, especially in view of Grote’s earlier claims in the same essay. How could the poor be so well secured against the rich, we might well ask, when (as Grote has just asserted on Demosthenes’ authority) they were both unwilling to challenge the aristocracy in their assemblies, and unable to enact any decisions they eventually reached? The young Grote has no answers to these questions, and it is no surprise that this early essay was never published. Nor is it a surprise that the argumentative strategy of Grote’s *History* would be so different.

That Grote developed into the formidable historian he was in his maturity was, ironically enough, in no small part due to William Mitford. As J.S. Mill’s reminiscences of reading the work as a child make clear (the philosopher’s “sympathies were always on the contrary side to those of the author”)<sup>46</sup> there was an urgent need for a liberal alternative to Mitford’s staunchly conservative interpretation of classical Greek history. But more than simply inviting replacement, Mitford’s work set a demanding standard of fullness, detail, and critical acumen, one that Grote was forced to work hard to meet. Though Grote more than rose to the challenge, we should not be too quick to write off the contribution of his Tory predecessor. Without his combination of (as Byron put it) “labour, learning, research, wrath, and partiality” the liberal Greek history that would eventually have been produced would have looked very different.

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43 Ibid., 87.

44 Ibid., 90.

45 Ibid., 93.

46 Quoted in Roberts, *Athens on Trial*, 247.



All the same, Mitford's influence was a function of the focused hostility that he inspired in liberal thinkers, and it is no surprise that Grote is (for the most part) unsparing in his criticisms of his predecessor. Nothing else than full on attack would win the field; although, on the other hand, it would not do to display too much vitriol in a historical controversy, thus laying himself open to the charge that he was as partial a Whiggish writer as Mitford was a Tory one. Accordingly, in his 1826 review of Mitford in the *Westminster Review* (we can, at this point, forget about Clinton, whose book Grote was supposed to be reviewing), Grote is careful to give Mitford some credit for the conventional scholarly virtues with which he was widely associated. The task of rooting out and supplanting Mitford was a delicate one, and it involved masking a merciless critique in measured and inoffensive terms. Grote's true feelings about Mitford's work can be gauged from a fascinating series of manuscript notes uncovered and partially transcribed by Kyriakos Demetriou, in which the liberal historian notes down his reactions to various portions of the Tory's work as he trawls through it:

[3] General remarks upon Tyrants. Prodigious violence of factions among the Greeks: wretched reasoning . . . [8] "Gratifying the people as they had been accustomed to be gratified"—it seems as if the tendency of any measures to convey immediate benefit to the people was a real objection to it in the eye of Mitford. [9] Mention of "extravagant and dishonest ambition" of the Athenian people: why more so than the appetite for conquest in a king? . . . [16] "It is often extremely difficult to ascertain the real springs of political measures in a free society . . ." (Nonsense—see Hume's essay).<sup>47</sup>

Grote's immediate and uncensored reactions to Mitford's narrative and opinions show how restrained in comparison his later review was, despite its obvious polemical force.

Grote opens his review with some *a priori* theorizing about what he takes to be one of the great questions of history—how the Greeks were able to produce so many brilliant artists and thinkers. Grote wagers that this was partly a product of their unrelenting competitiveness, a condition which was in its turn a result of the unusually high concentrations of population found in the Greek city-states. The Greeks' emulativeness found expression in sports, in the arts, in philosophical dialogue, but also in politics, and manifested itself in the form of democracies or (what for Grote is often very similar) moderate

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47 Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy*, 64.

oligarchies. "It is to democracy alone," he concludes, "that we owe that unparalleled brilliancy and diversity of talent which constitutes the charm and glory of Grecian history."<sup>48</sup>

Grote's piece of *ex tempore* speculation functions as a lead-in to his critique of Mitford, and as such it is strongly performative, serving both as the public launch of a new, audacious historical voice ("this is how I approach Greek history, as a democrat") and as a provocative first volley in the battle to come (the positive impact of democracy on Greek history is, it would seem, so obvious and well-founded that it can practically be derived from axioms, before we even have to engage with the sources). It also marks a clear contrast between Grote's own views, which are democratic and well-formed, and those of Mitford, which he now goes on to demonstrate are not only anti-democratic, but also internally inconsistent:

Sometimes he describes the sovereign assembly at Athens as composed of fullers, shoemakers, braziers, etc. at other times he tells us that "a sovereign people would not work"; sometimes he reproaches them as inspired with a restless thirst of conquest, at other times he arraigns their self-indulgence and luxury, because they will not serve on expeditions for conquest; in one place he talks awfully of the irresistible might of the sovereign assembly, in another he exhibits to us the "inherent impotence" of the most renowned ancient democracies.<sup>49</sup>

In this passage, Grote is not simply pointing out the incoherence of Mitford's arguments in particular, but also signalling to a whole tradition of anti-democratic writers that they cannot have it both ways. Either the Athenian *dêmos* was idle or it was hyperactive, but it cannot have been both at once.<sup>50</sup>

Grote also picked up on another argument used by Mitford that had a long pedigree in anti-democratic historiography. This is the idea that since Athens' democracy made mistakes and had obvious flaws, it was the worst of all possible systems. For Grote, this is to compare Athens unfairly with an unrealized utopia, rather than with the concrete constitutional alternatives that were available at the time:

48 G. Grote, *WR* 5 (1826): 280.

49 Ibid., 285. For this critique of Mitford, see E.M. Wood, *Peasant, Citizen and Slave: The Foundations of Athenian Democracy* (London: Verso, 1988), 15: "The mass of Athenian citizens whose control of government corrupted the city was at one and the same time a mob of idle paupers and a class of labourers and craftsmen."

50 For this tradition, see again Wood, *Peasant, Citizen and Slave*, Chapter 1, "The Myth of the Idle Mob."

We are far from wishing to dissemble, or to lessen their defects; but taking these defects at the utmost, and comparing the Grecian democracies with any other form of government, either existing in ancient times, or projected by the ancient philosophers, we have no hesitation in pronouncing them decidedly and unquestionably superior. That the securities which they provided for good government were lamentably deficient, we fully admit; but the oligarchies and monarchies afforded no securities at all, and aimed only at retaining the people under quiet subjection to bad government.<sup>51</sup>

In these final comments, Grote comes close to re-stating the intuition behind his letter to Frances Lewin, his wife's sister. Democracies may fail on occasion to protect citizens and provide good government; but since they are run by the people themselves they have every reason to try to do so. Autocratic forms of government, by contrast, do not simply fail to provide securities: they have no reason to want to provide them in the first place.

For Grote, the people's stable interest in correcting bad government makes democratic decision-making a continual readjustment. But what for Grote is simply the healthy tendency of the system to correct itself has provided yet more ammunition for democracy's critics. As Grote says, this "disposition to acknowledge and correct prior errors has been turned into a fresh reproach against the people, under the name of fickleness or inconstancy." To which reproach he has a ready answer:

even granting this to prove that the popular assembly could not be relied upon as the steady supporter of wisdom and justice, we infer still more conclusively that it could never be employed as the habitual instrument of folly or injustice.<sup>52</sup>

It is an answer that provides an effective rebuttal to the anti-democratic charge, skilfully accepting the charge of inconstancy and turning it to democracy's advantage. But here a sceptic might point out that while Grote has succeeded in parrying the charge that democracy's inconstancy means that it is condemned to produce injustice, he has not shown that an inconsistently unjust democracy would be superior to an enlightened autocracy that could

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51 Grote, review of Clinton, 293. For the tendency of critics of the democracy to compare it not with other real-world polities, but with hypothetical utopias, see Ober, *Political Dissent*.

52 Both passages from Grote, review of Clinton, 295.

sustain a constant measure of justice. As often, though, Grote's pointed reply is only the tip of a deeper intuition about democracy. In the first place, Grote points out that inconstant decision-making may be capable of adapting to changes in circumstances and understanding in a way that allows it to track justice better than its more constant alternatives. In the second place, whereas enlightened autocracies always run the risk of becoming unenlightened and thus a potent source of injustice, the repetitive nature of democratic decision-making guarantees that it can never become the consistently harmful tool of any one interest.

In the last third of his review, Grote pivots from rebutting Mitford's criticisms of democracy on a general level to a careful analysis of his predecessor's narrative of the wars between Philip of Macedon and Athens. We might well suppose that this was to the ordinary reader of the *Westminster Review* the least interesting part of the piece, and that it was around this point that Grote's fellow bankers for the most part stopped reading. But for the classical scholar it is the most devastating part of the review, in that it engages closely with Mitford's readings of (and inferences from) the sources, and shows in excruciating detail where they go wrong. Grote cannot be accused of mere pedantry here, since Mitford's narrative of the period is freighted with normativity, and the question of which party was more often the aggressor in northern and central Greece was central to his readers' evaluation of Philip and Athens (and hence, in a day when classical paradigms had considerable weight, to their evaluation of monarchy and democracy).

Evaluation of monarchy and democracy as systems, in other words, was tied up closely with the moral evaluation of ancient monarchical and democratic agents. Was King Philip the aggressor or was the Athenian *dêmos*? Though Mitford and Grote did battle in philological and historical terms, their battleground was mainly moral. The issue of morality had as central a place in the larger conceptual debate about Athenian democracy as in the fight over the details of historical narrative. The fickleness of the Athenian people had been a staple of anti-democratic literature since ancient times, but the various forms it has taken on in different eras can tell us much about the intellectual conditions of various periods. For Isocrates and Thucydides, inconsistent decision-making could only be a sign of a failure of rationality in the lower orders; for Hobbes, it was fair warning for those who would seek to compromise the supreme principle of the stability of the state.<sup>53</sup> For a Victorian

53 As Isocrates puts it (*Anti.* 203), χρή δὲ τοὺς νοῦν ἔχοντας οὐκ ἀνωμάλως ποιείσθαι τὰς κρίσεις περὶ τῶν ὁμοίων πραγμάτων. (Cf. also Isocrates' *To Nicocles*, one of whose burdens is that an individual sovereign is less vulnerable to inconsistency than a whole people.) Thucydides'

like Grote, Mitford's continual description of the Athenians as flighty and inconstant could only be perceived as a stain on their character, a smear which Grote himself was now well prepared to answer.

## 2 The Character of Democracy

Among the many values we associate with Victorian Britain—thrift, industry, prudishness—is the idea of character. Stefan Collini has stressed the importance of this concept in various fields of Victorian life, from the workhouse floor to the playing fields of Eton,<sup>54</sup> and it is (I argue) no less important in understanding the terms in which Grote's campaign to restore Athens' reputation was fought.

Character was, for the Victorians, in the first instance a virtue of individuals; it could in a secondary sense be attributed to whole nations, peoples, or races. Both of these senses are recorded in the (largely nineteenth century) *Oxford English Dictionary*, in which character is defined as

the sum of the mental and moral qualities which distinguish an individual or race viewed as a homogeneous whole; the individuality impressed by nature and habit on man or nation; mental or moral constitution.

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set-piece description of the Mytilenian Debate (3.36–50) is, I would argue, intended partly to showcase the inconsistency of the democratic Assembly.

For Hobbes, the greater tendency of the people to inconsistency is one of the main considerations that speaks in favour of vesting sovereignty in one person rather than several. As he says (*Leviathan*, London: Penguin, 1651/1968, 242), “the Resolutions of a Monarch, are subject to no other Inconstancy, than that of Humane Nature; but in Assemblies, besides that of Nature, there ariseth an Inconstancy from the Number.” Of course, Grote's character-based argument is not designed to deal with Hobbes' point about number, only with the more common argument that democracy produces men of bad character, who are therefore more inclined to flightiness.

Perhaps not coincidentally, modern critics of democracy have preferred to focus on variations of what Hobbes calls “Inconstancy from Number,” rather than on what might be called “inconsistency from character.” The most analytically rigorous of these critics is K. Arrow *Social Choice and Individual Values* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951); for a critique along the same lines, see also J.M. Buchanan, “Social Choice, Democracy, and Free Markets,” *Journal of Political Economy* 62 (1954): 114–123. For a possible way out of the impasse presented by Arrow, see now C. List and P. Pettit, *Group Agency: The Possibility, Design and Status of Corporate Agents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

54 S. Collini, “The Idea of ‘Character’ in Victorian Political Thought,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 35 (1985): 29–50, quoting the *OED* and tying it to its mainly nineteenth-century context on p. 33.

But national character was not simply a matter of the aggregation of individual character. Individual character and national character were intertwined and recursively influential: the character of individuals influenced the character of the nation they were a part of, and the character of a nation's institutions played a strong role in determining the character of the individuals that made it up.

The relevance of such ideas to eighteenth and nineteenth century receptions of ancient history is plain to see.<sup>55</sup> The Spartan *agogê* was often held up as a model against the Athenian system precisely because it was designed to inculcate fortitude, endurance, and military discipline in its citizens. If Grote was to overturn the Spartan model,<sup>56</sup> he would have to do so partly by showing that the Athenian constitution, rather than providing a framework for license as its many critics alleged, was equally capable of producing citizens with virtues that posterity could admire. In view of this, a counter-narrative of Athenian virtue would have to rehabilitate the stock villains of Greek history (Cleon, for example), and unmask the true baseness of its familiar heroes (Nicias, say). Grote's focus on individuals has often been misinterpreted as a sort of weakness, a concession to the school of Carlyle by a historian who

55 Cf. the epigraph to Avlami, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae* . . .," taken from G. B. de Mably *Observations sur l'histoire de la Grèce* (Genève: Compagnie des Libraires, 1766), iv: "Ce seroit un grand malheur, si on lassoit d'étudier les Grecs et les Romains; l'histoire de ces deux peuples est une grande école de morale et de politique: on n'y voit pas seulement jusqu'où peuvent s'élever les vertus et les talents des hommes sous les lois d'un sage gouvernement; leurs fautes mêmes serviront éternellement de leçons aux homes" (my emphasis).

56 The importance of the Spartan model is clear in the work of as influential a thinker as Rousseau (cf. e.g. *Du Contrat Social*, Paris: Flammarion, 1762/2001, 79 n. a: "l'institution de Lycurgue fit le Bonheur des Spartes"). Rousseau's attitude towards direct democracy is a complex one: despite strong theoretical inclinations towards it (see now J. Cohen, *Rousseau: A Free Society of Equals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), he had doubts about its practical viability (see esp. 105–7, with the notorious concluding hypothetical, "s'il y avait un peuple de Dieux, il se gouvernerait démocratiquement"). As with Madison (see n. 18 above) we can speculate that Rousseau's support for democracy would have been less qualified had he had access to a different ancient history. On the use of Sparta by the reactionary Joseph de Maistre, see Loraux and Vidal-Naquet, "La formation de l'Athènes bourgeoise," 199–200.

It must be said, though, that French liberals had already chipped away at the Spartan model after the revolution (cf. note 17 above). See Avlami, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae* . . ." 151, who goes so far as to say that by the dawn of the 19th century, "in France, Sparta was basically a settled affair. It sufficed to pick up the eighteenth-century discussion concerning its warlike habits, its inability to do business, and its contempt for the arts to show the pernicious character of Spartan egalitarianism."

should have known better. It would be better to see it as a rhetorical coup, an appropriation of the tools of novelists such as Dickens (for whom character is often, in the end, destiny)<sup>57</sup> to historiographical ends.

The idea of character may have been particularly important to Grote for more personal reasons. Collini has suggested that the notion of character, with its emphasis on hard work and self-reliance, was characteristic of the new, urban and liberal managerial classes that were rising to replace the conservative landowners of old in the wake of the industrial revolution. That this distinction maps onto the debate between Grote and Mitford is almost too obvious to need pointing out; and yet, as we have seen, it can be argued that Mitford, too, was concerned about Athenian character.<sup>58</sup> In any case, if Victorian London is present in Grote's Athens to any degree, I would submit that its presence is confined to this narrow compass: Grote's Athens is Victorian only insofar as its inhabitants display the moral virtues that the nineteenth-century intelligentsia laid claim to and admired.

That Grote was Victorian enough to place great emphasis on character should come as no great surprise, although it may come as a disappointment to any who are accustomed to seeing him as the first modern historian of

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57 Among the 5 Dickens novels serialized during the writing of Grote's *History*, see e.g. the divergent fates of characters such as Esther Summerson and Mr. Tulkinghorn in *Bleak House* (London: Penguin, 1852–3/2003).

58 On Mitford's role in framing the debate, cf. F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 204 (quoted in Wood, *Peasant, Citizen and Slave*, 17): "So complete had been his condemnation of the character of the Athenian state and so widespread was the acceptance of his views that he had in effect also established the grounds on which the reputation of Athens would have to be restored. The civic virtues that Mitford denied Athens possessed and, by implication, that a democratic polity could possess were features of government prized by Englishmen of various political persuasions. Later liberal historians consequently had to prove that Athens and, by implication, democracy had actually achieved these virtues."

Turner's discussion of "civic virtue" in Grote (213–34) partly anticipates my focus on "character" here. Though I am in full agreement with his main claims, my account differs from his in several matters of phraseology and emphasis. For instance, Turner sometimes presents Grote's concern with character as predominantly a result of his engagement with Mitford (e.g. 215: "Paradoxically, while refuting Mitford's indictment of Athens, Grote embraced as his own many, though by no means all, of the political virtues that Mitford had espoused"). But this may go too far: certainly, men like Macaulay and J.S. Mill, who shared Grote's interest in character, were not primarily concerned to refute Mitford's *History of Greece*.



ancient Greece (in the English-speaking world at least).<sup>59</sup> More unexpected is the close connection that seems to have existed in the minds of some of Grote's fellow radicals between good character on the one hand, and liberal democracy on the other. This should not be too unexpected: we are altogether too liable to forget that Adam's Smith *apologia* for liberal capitalism in the *Wealth of Nations* had been framed partly in terms of a defence of the compatibility of commercial society with particular virtues.<sup>60</sup> And we should also remember here Macaulay's opinion, stated in his review of Mitford, that particular constitutions were suited to particular peoples.<sup>61</sup> J.S. Mill seems to have believed (as Macaulay certainly did) that the English were particularly well suited to democratic government: so much can be read from his reference to "that point of character which beyond any other fits the people of *this* country for representative government." In his *System of Logic*, Mill went further, seeking to make the principle universal by declaring that "the laws of national character are by far the most important class of sociological laws"; it was indeed, "the power by which all those of the circumstances of society which are artificial, laws and customs for instance, are altogether moulded."<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere, he pronounces character "the determining issue in the question of government."<sup>63</sup>

It is not difficult to discern issues of character in Grote's nineteenth-century antecedents in Greek history, even outside of Britain. Wachsmuth had stressed, according to Roberts, "the role of bad character in the failure of the Athenian democracy," and had identified credulity and irascibility as the most

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59 E.g. Rhodes, *Ancient Democracy and Modern Ideology*, 32: "His *History of Greece* was perhaps the first history of Greece which we can still recognize as a work of what we should understand as serious scholarship." For an attempt to push the origins of modernity in the study of ancient history back into the 18th century, see now G. Ceserani, "Modern Histories of Ancient Greece: Genealogies, Contexts and Eighteenth-Century Narrative Historiography," *Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics*, 2008.

60 On commerce and the virtues in the thinking of Adam Smith, see A. Fitzgibbons, *Adam Smith's System of Liberty, Wealth, and Virtue: The Moral and Political Foundations of the Wealth of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); C.L. Griswold, *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); R.P. Hanley, *Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Though they disagree on the precise conception of the virtues Smith was defending, these scholars all agree that one of Smith's major concerns was to stipulate a set of institutions and practices that could preserve morality against the corrupting impact of unregulated commerce.

61 Quoted in Roberts, *Athens on Trial*, 236.

62 Both quotations taken from Collini, "The Idea of 'Character,'" 41.

63 *Ibid.*, 31.

prominent features of the classical Athenian. Schömann had lambasted the mob “haunting the ports and the marketplaces,” characterizing the Athenian *dêmos* as “*naturally* fickle, seditious and idle” (my emphasis).<sup>64</sup> That character should play such a significant role in Grote’s Athens will not seem an eccentric hypothesis if we consider that he himself identified the distinctive features of his historiography as “earnestness of moral interest, combined with the laborious study of evidence.”<sup>65</sup>

The centrality of character in Grote’s *History* was noted by his most perceptive reviewer, J.S. Mill. Grote’s long disquisition on mythology is, according to Mill, writing in the *Edinburgh Review*, “incident to the design, which no one before had seriously entertained, of making the history of Greece a picture of the Greek mind.” Commenting on a long passage in which Grote links the cultural achievements of Greece with their habit of discussion in agoras and assemblies, Mill remarks that

Not only the oratory of Demosthenes and Pericles, and the colloquial magic of Socrates, but also the philosophical speculations of Plato, and the systematic politics, rhetoric, and logic of Aristotle, are traceable to the same general tendencies in the minds of the Grecian people; and we find the germ of these expansive forces in the senate and agora of their legendary government.

Here we see the connection between institutions and (intellectual) character that are such an important feature of Grote’s theory. Grote’s description of the expedition of Cyrus and the retreat of Xenophon and the Ten Thousand is for Mill “an episode fertile in exemplifications of Grecian and of Asiatic characteristics.”<sup>66</sup> The word “character” eventually becomes a kind of leit-motif of Mill’s review: “There is no point in the character of the Athenians more remarkable, than their respect and attachment to the forms of their Constitution”; “Cleisthenes, an eminent man, to whose character and historical importance no one before Mr. Grote had done justice”; the view that Grote presents “of some points in the character and disposition of the Athenian Many” will be instructive to readers. In particular cases Mill seems to go even farther than Grote in his faith in the distinguishing power of national character, as in his claim that the Delian League would never have become an empire

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64 Both quotations from Roberts, *Athens on Trial*, 251.

65 Clarke, *George Grote*, 106.

66 All three passages from J.S. Mill, *ER* 84 (1846): 343–77. The longer passage addresses Grote, *History of Greece*, 2.104–6.

had it not been for the indolence of some “comparatively unwarlike and unenergetic Asiatic Greeks” among the allies.<sup>67</sup>

Grote's rehabilitation of the character of Athenian democracy depends on a complex strategy that combines several tactics. Grote occasionally in his *History* is content to defend Athens against the charges laid against it in the minimal, defensive way he had in his review of Mitford—by pointing out that the accusations of its critics were often self-contradictory. So, for example, the arguments which Thucydides ascribes to the Athenians in the Melian Dialogue “are not in harmony even with the defects of the Athenian character” as Athens' critics usually portray them; that is, the Athenians are usually accused of “equivocal wording,” but in Thucydides' text they display instead “a sort of audacious frankness.”<sup>68</sup> At times he depicts the Athenians as paradigmatic Greeks, in that they have the characteristic features of the Greek people—brilliance, fortitude, and so on—writ large: “The citizen-soldier of Greece generally, and especially of Athens,” Grote informs us, “possessed in a high degree both personal bravery and attachment to order and discipline.”<sup>69</sup> Non-Athenians who are particularly enterprising or brave are often said to be displaying the virtues of an Athenian; Brasidas, for instance, was in his self-reliance and probity “in character more Athenian than Spartan, yet with the good qualities of Athens predominant.”<sup>70</sup> Since his predecessors had almost never given the Athenians the benefit of the doubt, Grote often errs on the side of positive assumptions. Hence when he cannot deflect Thucydides' allegation that the Athenian people had erroneous ideas about Hippias and Hipparchus, Grote comments that “we are surprised at such a degree of historical carelessness in the Athenian public.”<sup>71</sup> The “we are” here approaches “we should be.”

The dark side to Grote's rehabilitation of the character of democratic Athenians is that he often pursues his aim by denigrating the character of foreigners. In 510, for instance, the Thessalians abandon Cleomenes' army “with a faithlessness not unfrequent [*sic*] in the Thessalian character.”<sup>72</sup> The typical Greek soldier under Brasidas possessed “the sentiment . . . of a certain place which he has to fill and duties which he has to perform,” a feeling which had “no response in the army of Xerxes, or the Thracian Sitalces, or the Gaul Brennus.” This is due to the fact that “the Illyrian or Gaul . . . obeys only the instigation

67 All four quotations from J.S. Mill 1853, *ER* 98 (1853): 245–47.

68 Grote, *History of Greece*, 7.162.

69 *Ibid.*, 5.65.

70 *Ibid.*, 7.11.

71 *Ibid.*, 4.287.

72 *Ibid.*, 4.297.

of his own pugnacity, or vengeance, or love of blood, or love of booty." Indeed, "it is the Greek soldier alone who feels himself bound to his comrades by ties reciprocal and indissoluble."<sup>73</sup> It goes without saying that this applies to the Athenians most of all.

At times Grote seems to have felt that the contrast between Athenians and ancient non-Greek peoples did not go far enough; for a really instructive comparison, he had to bring in contemporary populations. Hence his remark that in the Athenian character "the pressure of necessity was less potent, as a stimulus to action, than hopeful confidence and elation" while "in the character of some other races, the Jews for instance, the comparative force of these motives appears to be reversed."<sup>74</sup> Very occasionally, Grote brings things even closer to home. The "co-existence of freedom and self-imposed restraint" that Grote attributes to the Athenians can, he says "be found in . . . England . . . as well as in the democracy of the American United States" while "the many violences of the first French revolution illustrate, among various other lessons, the fatal effects arising from its absence, even among a people high in the scale of intelligence."<sup>75</sup>

The disparagement of the French at the end of this passage (only partly concealed here beneath the veil of scholarly qualification) is in the time-honoured English manner, but we should remember the valence that the revolution had for men like Mitford and Burke. It is undoubtedly true that Grote transformed our image of Athens mainly by pointing out how well democratic institutions actually functioned. But this passage is equally part of his intellectual war against Mitford, and the idea behind this particular move seems to be more nineteenth century than liberal. Athenian democracy, Grote seems to be suggesting, did not end up like the French Revolution partly because of the character of the people involved in it: where the French (despite their high intelligence) lacked self-discipline, the Athenians had it, and it is partly this that determined the different fates of their societies. The English, naturally, also had this quality, and so readers of Grote would not have to think very hard to come up with a convenient explanation for why their empire had long eclipsed that of their rivals across the Channel.

This convenient reconciliation of Athenian and British democracy by reference to a similarly sterling character was, of course, exactly what Macaulay would have wanted. It may also, more troublingly, have won the approval of J.S. Mill. But to be fair to Grote (and Mill), the story here is a slightly more complex

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 7.18–9.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 7.352.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 4.325.

one than the simple derivation of political destinies from initial endowments of virtue. It is true that, for Grote, “no system of government . . . can ever pretend to accomplish its legitimate end apart from the personal character of the people, or to supersede the necessity of individual virtue and vigour.”<sup>76</sup> But it is also true that what seems to set the conditions for the development of that necessary individual virtue and vigour is, for Grote, the establishment of suitable political and social institutions. This is Grote's answer to the Spartan *agogê*: instead of military mess-halls, Athenians had political associations, and these educated Athenian citizens in fellow-feeling just as effectively as the mess-halls trained soldiers in solidarity.<sup>77</sup>

It was necessary [for Cleisthenes] to create in the multitude . . . that rare and difficult sentiment which we may term a constitutional morality—a paramount reverence for the forms of the constitution, enforcing obedience to the authorities acting under and within those forms, yet combined with the habit of open speech, of action subject only to definite legal control, and unrestrained censure of those very authorities as to all their public acts—combined too with a perfect confidence in the bosom of every citizen, amidst the bitterness of a party contest, that the form of the constitution will be not less sacred in the eyes of his opponents than in his own.<sup>78</sup>

We may detect here something of the Englishman's pride in his own parliament's notion of a loyal opposition, but the importance of the passage lies mainly in its implicit attribution of credit for various moral virtues to democratic institutions. Where the Spartans had Lycurgus, the Athenians had Cleisthenes, and it is “from the time of Kleisthenes downward” that “the creation of this new mighty [democratic] impulse makes an entire revolution in the Athenian character.”<sup>79</sup> Athens' stunning military victories shortly after the establishment

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76 Ibid., 4.348.

77 For a less moralistic account along similar lines, drawing on the modern theory of social capital, see J.C. Kierstead, *A Community of Communities: Associations and Democracy in Classical Athens* (Stanford diss. 2013; with explicit engagement with Grote at 188–9). That Grote's view might have won the approval of J.S. Mill should not be taken to imply that Mill had no opinions of his own on this topic: for a thorough study of them, see G. Varouxakis, *Mill on Nationality* (London: Routledge, 2002). For Varouxakis, although Mill's interest in race can be exaggerated, national character was one of the philosopher's central concerns at virtually every stage of his career.

78 Grote, *History of Greece*, 4.325.

79 Ibid., 4.347.

of the new system are evidence of “the rapid improvement wrought in the Athenian people by their new democracy,” and Xerxes’ invasion of Greece would provide the first real test of “the altered position and character of the Athenians.”<sup>80</sup> Drawing attention to the true importance of Cleisthenes’ reforms was, it should be pointed out, one of the key elements in Grote’s revolutionary rewriting of Athenian history, and (carrying with us a sense of the centrality of character) it is to this revolution that we must now turn.

### 3 A Revolutionary Athens

In contrast to the majority of his predecessors, Grote is clear that the “great democratical impulse . . . commences properly with Kleisthenes, and not with Solon.”<sup>81</sup> He later qualifies this judgment by saying that Cleisthenes’ system, “though highly democratical, stopped short of the mature democracy which prevailed from Perikles to Demosthenes, in three ways especially,” these being the continuing use of archons as judges rather than citizen jurors; the continuing election (rather than allotment) of archons; and the continuing exclusion of the poorest class of Athenians from magistracies.<sup>82</sup> For these reasons, the

80 Ibid., 5.173.

81 Ibid., 3.340. For an influential modern statement of this claim, see J. Ober, “The Athenian Revolution of 508/7 B.C.: Violence, Authority, and the Origins of Democracy,” in Kurke and Dougherty, eds. *The Cultural Politics of Archaic Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 215–32 (now in revised form as “I Besieged that Man’: Democracy’s Revolutionary Start,” in Raaflaub, Ober and Wallace, eds. *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, 83–104).

82 Grote, *History of Greece*, 4.319. The singling out of these three specific reforms is slightly idiosyncratic. The use of archons as judges (for which see e.g. R. Sealey, *The Athenian Republic: Democracy or the Rule of Law?* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987, 111–4) seems to have ceased sometime in the 480s, around the time of the change in the method of their selection from election to sortition (usually dated to 487/6: [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 22.5; Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy*, 36; Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 76). This change, of course, is distinct from the more famous reform of Ephialtes, in which the judicial role of the Areopagus (composed of ex-archons) was severely restricted (discussed by Grote at 4.320–1; for Ephialtes’ reforms as a cardinal moment for the democracy, see the next note). In referring to the opening of magistracies to the lower classes, Grote probably had in mind the reform of 458/7, in which most of Athens’ magistracies (but not the archonship or the treasury of Athena) were opened to the third of the four Solonian property-classes, the *zeugitai* (but not yet to the poorest class, the *thêtes*; see *Ath. Pol.* 26.2; Hansen, 37; Ober, 80).

Cleisthenic constitution "is to be distinguished" not only from "the mitigated oligarchy established by Solon before" but also from "the full-grow and symmetrical democracy which prevailed afterwards from the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, towards the close of the career of Perikles."<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, nowhere does Grote come close to withdrawing his pronouncement that Cleisthenes' "partnership with the people gave birth to the Athenian democracy: it was a real and important revolution."<sup>84</sup>

That Grote was convinced of this, and that he was able to state his unorthodox view so confidently, is partly because of the importance he attached to the development of democratic character. Though with Solon "the seeds of the subsequent democracy had been sown," nonetheless "nothing in the nature of a democratical sentiment had yet been created," and it was this that was crucial to the establishment of democracy.<sup>85</sup> A consequence of Grote's view of Cleisthenes' role as fundamentally ideological and social is that he sometimes underplays the concrete constitutional changes that Cleisthenes introduced. After the expulsion of Hippias, Grote writes, "the enslaved forms" of the ancestral constitution "became at once endued with freedom and reality" almost as if the coming of democratic government was a simply a matter of boosting citizen morale.<sup>86</sup> "For more than thirty years" Grote writes, "the old [Solonian] constitution had been a mere empty formality";<sup>87</sup> in Grote's view, Cleisthenes' major contribution was in remodelling and revivifying that constitution, not in overhauling it. "Cleisthenes preserved," he insists, "but at the same time modified and expanded, all the main features of Solon's political constitution." This applies especially to the two major institutions of state, the "senate [i.e. the council] and the public assembly," which, Grote assures us, were "far more

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83 Grote, *History of Greece*, 4.333. For recent arguments that Athenian democracy started with the reforms of Solon or Ephialtes, see R.W. Wallace, "Revolutions and a New Order in Solonian Athens and Archaic Greece"; and K. Raaflaub, "The Breakthrough of *Demokratia* in Mid-Fifth-Century Athens," in Raaflaub, Ober and Wallace, *Origins of Democracy*, 49–82 and 105–54.

84 Grote, *History of Greece*, 4.301. For a modern defence of the term "revolution" in the context of Cleisthenes' reforms, see again Ober, "The Athenian Revolution," a phrase taken up as the title of a later collection, J. Ober, *The Athenian Revolution: Essays on Ancient Greek Democracy and Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press). For doubts about the term, see Rhodes, *Ancient Democracy and Modern Ideology*, 77.

85 Grote, *History of Greece*, 4.279.

86 Ibid., 4.300.

87 Ibid., 4.303.



popular and vigorous [after Cleisthenes] than they had been under the original arrangement of Solon.”<sup>88</sup>

More important, for Grote, was Cleisthenes’ introduction of a new system of tribes and demes that mixed citizens up and brought them together in ways which fostered a sense of nationhood.<sup>89</sup> It also fostered particularly democratic virtues; and it seems at times as if the entire Athenian political experiment was for Grote at bottom an attempt to encourage virtue and guard against vice. After all

Beyond the judgment of the people (so the Athenians felt), there was no appeal. Their grand study was to surround the delivery of that judgment with the best securities for rectitude, and the best preservatives against haste, passion, or private corruption.<sup>90</sup>

The revindication of the Athenian political system in the eyes of a Victorian public had, as we have seen, to take the form of a revindication of the moral character that its institutions instilled in its citizens. It is for this reason that Grote’s *History*, otherwise so forward thinking in the attention it gives to institutions and to geography, focuses so intently on the case for and against particular figures in Athenian history.

These individuals were not, we should remember, merely figures in Athenian history. They were also characters in a European historiographical tradition that could be traced back to the very time it described. Like Bill Sikes in *Oliver Twist* (1838) or Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* (1852–3), the major

88 Ibid., 4.308. Of course, Grote also notes the main institutional changes to these bodies, e.g. the expansion of the Solonian Council of 400 into a Cleisthenic Council of 500.

89 *Ath. Pol.* 21.2 describes Cleisthenes as “wishing to mix up” (ἀναμείξει βουλόμενος) the people. For an aggressive reading of the reforms in terms of nation-building rather than democracy, see G. Anderson, *The Athenian Experiment: Building an Imagined Political Community in Ancient Attica, 508–490 B.C.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), esp. 44: “the primary purpose of this mixing seems to have been to generate a stronger sense of common interest and purpose within the citizen community as a whole”; whatever the merits of Anderson’s argument that the reforms were *more* concerned with solidarity than democracy, the reforms certainly would have increased inter-citizen cohesion. The most accessible introduction to the Cleisthenic institutional architecture is probably R. Osborne, *Greece in the Making 1200–479 B.C.* (London: Routledge, 1996), 292–308; for a more advanced look at the dynamics of the system, see Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge*, 134–56.

90 Grote, *History of Greece*, 4.327.

characters in the histories of Mitford and Grote vividly embody the moral assumptions of their authors both in their positive and negative forms. It is because of this that Grote's task is not simply to rehabilitate staple democratic villains, but also to destroy the reputation of the darlings of aristocratic historiography. Chief among these was Nicias, the powerful statesman and general who, despite his early opposition to the expedition, was in joint command of the Athenian forces in Sicily when they were annihilated at the hands of the Syracusans. Nicias' fellow aristocrat Thucydides (from whose account all subsequent writers took their cue) is ambivalent about the general. On the one hand Nicias is "excessively inclined to augury and things of that sort"<sup>91</sup> and his insistence on a delay recommended by soothsayers is part of what seals the Athenians' fate in Syracuse. On the other hand, after describing Nicias' execution at the hands of the Syracusans, Thucydides comments that he was "the least deserving of the Greeks of my time to have come to such an extremity of misfortune, because his way of life was wholly dedicated to virtue."<sup>92</sup>

Most of Grote's predecessors were content to take the latter assertion at face value and to take Thucydides' scornful references to Nicias' superstition as evidence of something they could approve of, piety. By the time of Grote's immediate forerunners, Nicias had achieved heroic status beside Socrates as a good man done to death by the delusions and follies of the Athenian mob.<sup>93</sup> For Gillies, he was straightforwardly "the most pious, the most virtuous . . . man of the age in which he lived,"<sup>94</sup> and Goldsmith confessed he could not "forbear shedding tears at the tragical fate of . . . Nicias, who, of all men of his time, seemed least to merit so ignominious and untimely an end."<sup>95</sup> (Both these historians' dependence on Thucydides is striking.)<sup>96</sup>

91 Thuc. 7.50.4: ἦν γάρ τι καὶ ἄγαν θειασμῶι τε καὶ τῶι τοιοῦτῳ προσκείμενος.

92 Thuc. 7.86.5: ἥμισυ δὲ ἄξιός ὢν τῶν γε ἐπ' ἐμοῦ Ἑλλήνων ἐς τοῦτο δυστυχίας ἀφικέσθαι διὰ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐς ἀρετὴν νενομισμένην ἐπιτήδευσιν.

93 Cf. Turner, *The Greek Heritage*, 229: "Nicias, who had long enjoyed an unblemished reputation for piety, honesty, patriotism, and bravery . . . Grote dissected . . . with the keenest of polemical blades."

94 Quoted in Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy*, 105.

95 O. Goldsmith, *The History of Greece from the Earliest State to the Death of Alexander the Great* (London: Baynes, 1774/1825), 169.

96 At times their accounts verge on being straightforward translations of Thucydides' text. Cf. e.g. Gillies' "of the age in which he lived" and Thuc.'s ἐπ' ἐμοῦ; as well as Goldsmith's "seemed least to merit so ignominious and untimely an end" with Thuc.'s ἥμισυ δὲ ἄξιός ὢν . . . ἐς τοῦτο δυστυχίας ἀφικέσθαι (for the quotations from Thuc., see n. 92 above).

Grote's judgment of Nicias was very different. Since his critique was at the same time so devastating and so mould-breaking, I quote it at some length:

Admitting fully both the good intentions of Nikias and his personal bravery, rising even into heroism during the last few days in Sicily, it is not the less incontestable that, first, the failure of the enterprise, next, the destruction of the armament, is to be traced distinctly to his lamentable misjudgment. Sometimes petty trifling, sometimes apathy and inaction, sometimes presumptuous neglect, sometimes obstinate blindness even to urgent and obvious necessities, one or other of these, his sad mental defects, will be found operative at every step, whereby this fated armament sinks down from exuberant efficiency into the last depth of aggregate ruin and individual misery . . . The man whose flagrant incompetency could bring such wholesale ruin upon two fine armaments entrusted to his command, upon the Athenian maritime empire, and ultimately upon Athens herself, must appear on the tablets of history under the severest condemnation.<sup>97</sup>

For the writer of what was known as "philosophical history," it was the historian's prerogative and duty to judge, and in condemning Nicias Grote also reprieved the Athenian people of the charge that they had been unduly harsh to a blameless man.<sup>98</sup>

This is most obvious in Grote's treatment of the occasion partway through Nicias' mission in Sicily when he sends a letter to the Athenians reporting on the unpromising state and lack of progress of the expedition.<sup>99</sup> When, Grote says, we consider "the character generally ascribed by historians of Greece to the Athenian people; that they are represented as fickle, ungrateful and irritable, by standing habit" we might expect them to react harshly. Instead, the people refuse even to relieve Nicias of his command, even though the

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97 Grote, *History of Greece*, 6.182.

98 For 18th-century philosophical history, see e.g. J.G.A. Pocock, "Between Machiavelli and Hume: Gibbon as Civic Humanist and Philosophical Historian," *Daedalus* 105 (1976): 153–169. As Pocock describes it, "philosophical history . . . may be seen as a tradition of continuous debate about certain questions [pursued through historiography]" (153). Grote's use of Greek history for political ends is, of course, obvious to both his admirers and his detractors. For continuities between Grote and the 18th-century enlightenment, see n. 60 above.

99 Thuc. 7.10–8.

demoralized and ailing general has explicitly asked them to do so. We learn from this, Grote instructs his readers,

a clear lesson, that the habitual defects of the Athenian character were very different from what historians commonly impute to them. Instead of being fickle, we find them tenacious in the extreme of confidence once bestowed, and of schemes once embarked upon: instead of ingratitude for services actually rendered, we find credit given for services which an officer ought to have rendered, but has not: instead of angry captiousness, we discover an indulgence not merely generous but even culpable, in the midst of disappointment and humiliation: instead of a public assembly, wherein, as it is commonly depicted, the criminative orators were omnipotent, and could bring to condemnation any unsuccessful general however meritorious,—we see that even grave and well-founded accusations make no impression upon the people in opposition to pre-established personal esteem;—and personal esteem for a man who was not only no demagogue, but in every respect the opposite of a demagogue; an oligarch by taste, sentiment, and position, who yielded to the democracy nothing more than sincere obedience, coupled with gentleness and munificence in his private bearing.<sup>100</sup>

The Athenians' treatment of Nicias, rather than reflecting shamefully on them, is in fact an excellent example of their steadfastness and loyalty.

Grote is not entirely on firm ground with Nicias. Although no historian today would describe the Athenian general (or anyone, for that matter) as a model of virtue, it seems unfair for Grote to blame him for the failure of the entire expedition.<sup>101</sup> As we have already noted, Nicias was against the expedition in the first place, and if his dithering and misjudgement contributed in a

100 Grote, *History of Greece*, 7.311. Cf. Grote's later use of the career of Demosthenes to make a similar point. Despite the eventual defeat of the orator's anti-Macedonian policy, the Athenians never turned against him. Indeed, "that he always came off acquitted, and even honourably acquitted, is a proof of rare fidelity and steadiness among the Athenians" (12.215).

101 For a more comprehensive analysis of why the Sicilian expedition failed, see S. Hornblower *The Greek World: 479–323 B.C.*<sup>3</sup> (London: Routledge, 2002), 163–72, who cites (168) diplomatic failures, insufficient cavalry, procrastination and dithering, the recall of Alcibiades, and the failure to recall Nicias after his letter home. Whatever we think of this list, it at least reminds us that the failure of the expedition was too complicated an affair to be blamed on any single individual. (For this claim by Grote, see the last sentence of the passage from Grote, 6.182, quoted above.) Of course, as Hornblower admits (170–1)

significant way to the Athenians' eventual obliteration, it can hardly be denied that ultimate responsibility for the disastrously over-ambitious mission lies with the Assembly itself. Equally, although the Athenians' reaction to Nicias' letter certainly absolves the Athenians of the charge of constantly going back on their decisions, it still stands out as a spectacularly destructive example of the human tendency to reinforce failure. Though Nicias was certainly far from perfect, Grote's remarks about his "sad mental defects and flagrant incompetency" sometimes descend to the level of name-calling and for the most part fail to stick. But if his destruction of the aristocrats' hero was only partially successful, his rehabilitation of their *bête noire* would be more so.

In the anti-democratic tradition of history writing, Cleon was the villain of the tale, an anti-Nicias who embodied everything that was wrong about the rule of the people. As with Nicias, aristocratic historians took their cue from their aristocratic predecessor, Thucydides, who introduced Cleon to his readers as being "the most violent of the citizens" of Athens.<sup>102</sup> Later on, when the historian is describing Cleon's fulfillment of his pledge to bring the Spartans on Sphacteria to Athens, he writes that "the promise, even though it was insane, was carried out,"<sup>103</sup> as if the successful conduct of operations had been simply a matter of luck. Thucydides' low opinion of Cleon was eagerly taken up by subsequent historians keen to heap their insults onto the back of a convincing democratic scapegoat. Stanyan in his *Grecian History* called Cleon "rash, arrogant and obstinate, contentious, envious, and malicious, covetous and corrupt" (a description in which, as Demetriou says, he "exhausted all his depreciatory adjectives"). Even the comparatively mild Bishop Thirwall labeled him a

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Nicias should bear part of the blame, but to make him bear the whole of it is to take too simplistic a view of the causality of a complex series of events.

Though contemporary historians may avoid engagement with the question of Nicias' character, he remains a focal point in discussions of the performance and decision-making of the Athenian democracy. A common theme in these discussions is that Nicias is a sub-par deliberator. H. Yunis, *Taming the Democracy: Models of Political Rhetoric in Classical Athens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 101–9 offers a reading of Thucydides in which the debate over the launching of the Sicilian expedition provides an example of how "pursuing personal rather than communal goals, *rhētores* lie to the *dēmos* and inflame their emotions" (101). For Ober, *Political Dissent*, 104–21, Nicias embarks upon "a deceitful rhetorical strategy" which "results in evil outcomes for Athens" (113). Similarly, in the opinion of E. Flaig, *Die Mehrheitsentscheidung: Entstehung und kulturelle Dynamik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2013), 331–40, "die Deliberation misslang, weil [Nikias] seine Meinung nicht offen und ehrlich aussprach, sondern einen Trick anwandte" (340).

102 Thuc. 3.36.6: βαιότατος τῶν πολιτῶν.

103 Thuc. 4.39.3: καίπερ μανιώδης οὔσα ἢ ὑπόσχεσις ἀπέβη.

"master of impudence."<sup>104</sup> Nobody, it seemed, was a more improbable candidate for historiographical redemption than Cleon.

And yet a measure of redemption is exactly what Grote provided. Grote's Cleon is not entirely innocent of blemishes, and Grote shows more even-handedness than some of his rivals in admitting that "the powerful and violent invective of Kleon" was "often dishonest," though this had to be balanced by a positive appreciation of his "self-confidence and audacity in the public assembly."<sup>105</sup> All the same, Grote's intention is clearly to provide Cleon with a counsel for the defence, a luxury the politician had gone largely without through nearly two thousand years of historiography. Cleon's promise to capture the Spartans besieged on Sphacteria was not mad at all, Grote asserts, but "a reasonable and even modest anticipation of the future."<sup>106</sup> This judgment seems itself to be a reasonable and even modest one, and it is alarming in retrospect how many historians had accepted at face value Thucydides' implication that it was brash to promise that 440 Spartan hoplites besieged on an island could be defeated by a vastly larger Athenian force.<sup>107</sup> Equally reasonable is Grote's defence of Cleon's self-made wealth; the statesman was "not a leather-seller of impudent and abusive eloquence, but . . . munificent and affable, having credit not only for the largesse which he bestowed, but for all the insolences which as a rich man he might have committed but did not commit." Grote's does occasionally stoop to special pleading: his attempt to clear Cleon's character by insisting that he was not the only one to be calling for the Mytileneans to be executed *en masse* after their revolt does not entirely remove the moral stain, nor does his follow-up plea that Cleon was only proposing what was conventional at the time. But both points should be seen as part of a deeper logic at work in all Grote's writing on Athenian politics. For Grote, Cleon and his fellow orators in the assembly could only propose motions that they thought had a good chance of winning the support of Athenians at the time. Whether the Athenians' inclinations always pointed towards justice was another matter, but to accuse men like Cleon of corrupting them was to misunderstand the balance of power in Athenian politics.

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104 Quotations from Stanyan, Demetriou, and Thirwall: Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy*, 100.

105 Quoted in Chambers, "George Grote's History of Greece," 17.

106 *Ibid.*, 16.

107 On this point, see now Flaig, *Mehrheitsentscheidung*, 327: "Der Plan, die Insel mit überlegenen Kräften zu stürmen, war ja alles andere als dumm, er war eigentlich naheliegend und führte tatsächlich zum Erfolg"; and again, 329, re. Thuc. 4.39.3: "Wie kann wahnsinnig sein, was der Stratege Demosthenes an einem Tag schaffte?"

Grote's defence of Cleon is part of a wider argument over the character of Athenian 'demagogues'—although for Grote they were less the people's manipulators than their servants. Grote himself uses the term, although he excuses himself for it in a staggeringly straight-faced passage:

I here employ the term demagogues because it is that commonly used by those who denounce the class of men here under review: the proper neutral phrase, laying aside odious associations, would be to call them, popular speakers or opposition speakers.

The rhetoric here is that of the impassioned advocate earnestly insisting that he, unlike his opponents, is unwaveringly objective (even though Grote has just called the demagogues "the vital movement of all that was tutelary and public-spirited in democracy").<sup>108</sup> For all that, if we bear in mind his picture of Cleon, it does seem somewhat more well-rounded than that painted by his predecessors, and as usual Grote's underlying argument is a sound one.<sup>109</sup> The demagogues were not a hateful band of wreckers intent on corrupting the people, but a necessary and integral part of the Athenian system, in which unrestricted debate was of paramount importance.<sup>110</sup>

Grote's rehabilitation of the demagogues should be taken together with his similar rescue of the sophists, a rescue summed up by Stanley in an 1851 edition of the *Quarterly Review*:

According to the common notion they were a sect; according to him they were a class or profession. According to the common view they were the propagators of demoralizing doctrines, and (what from them are termed) "sophistical" argumentations. According to Mr. Grote, they were the regular teachers of Greek morality, neither above nor below the standard of the age. According to the common view, Socrates was the great opponent of the Sophists, and Plato his natural successor in the same combat. According to Mr. Grote, Socrates was the great representative of the Sophists, distinguished from them only by his higher eminence and by the peculiarity of his mode of life and teaching. According to the common view, Plato and his followers were the authorised teachers,

<sup>108</sup> Grote, *History of Greece*, 8.38.

<sup>109</sup> For Grote's picture of Cleon as well-rounded (and including occasional criticisms of the politician) see Chambers, "George Grote's History of Greece," 17.

<sup>110</sup> The point has been re-made in more recent times by M.I. Finley, "Athenian Demagogues," *Past & Present* 21 (1962): 3–24.



the established clergy of the Greek nation, and the Sophists the dissenters. According to Mr. Grote, the Sophists were the established clergy, and Plato was the dissenter—the Socialist, who attacked the Sophists . . . not as a particular sect, but as one of the existing orders of society.<sup>111</sup>

Stanley's précis of Grote's position in terms of the religious landscape of Victorian England sits oddly with the secular tone of Grote's writing, but he has grasped the historian's central point: the sophists, like the demagogues, were part and parcel of Athenian society.

Curiously enough, one of the cardinal episodes in Grote's transformation of our views of Athenian history concerns religion, and it is one, as I have said, which has him entering into the Athenians' religious sensibilities in a way no previous historian had done. This is curious partly because one of the main lines of attack against Grote in his day was that his work was not religious enough: Carlyle described Grote's work as "a fetid quagmire, with nothing spiritual about it," and Stanley regretted the absence of "touches of Christian feeling" and "direct allusions to . . . Providence" at work in historical events.<sup>112</sup> The episode I have in mind is of course the mutilation of the Herms and the profanation of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Athenian reaction to which most historians had seen as exaggerated at best, and at worst downright irrational. In an audacious employment of the comparative method, Grote argues that the Athenian reaction to these events was in fact markedly better than that of modern, Christian peoples in the face of comparable desecrations. (Grote could see that they were comparable precisely because he did not share the faith of men like Thirwall, for whom there was simply no comparing pagan superstition and revealed truth.) Grote appeals to the violent reaction of the English after the (fictitious) Popish Plot in 1678–9, that of the French in 1766 after a crucifix was damaged by two young men, and that of the Italians in 1630 in the case of the Untori (anointers accused of spreading the plague in Milan by means of ointments applied to doors of houses). The continental cases were especially grisly: the two young Frenchmen were condemned to have their right hands cut off, their tongues cut out, and then to be burnt at the stake; the Untori were extensively tortured before being publically executed. Grote is not shy in pointing up the moral (after all, in the French case, this was a sentence passed "not by the people, nor by any popular judicature, but by a limited court of professional judges"): we learn from such cases

111 Quoted in Clarke, *George Grote*, 118.

112 Quotations from both Carlyle and Stanley in Clarke, *George Grote*, 122.

the degree to which public excitement and alarm can operate to poison and barbarise the course of justice in a Christian city, without a taint of democracy, and with professional lawyers and judges to guide the whole procedure secretly—as compared with a pagan city, ultra-democratical, where judicial procedure as well as decision was all oral, public and multitudinous.<sup>113</sup>

Time and time again, atrocities such as the execution of Socrates had been lain at the door of the Athenians and used as incriminating evidence in the trial of democracy. This had been done largely without any reference to the crimes committed by other societies which were not democratic. The constant harping on such acts of violence by the people was for Grote a form of libel, a calumny that could only be erased by appealing to evidence of equally gory transgressions on the part of Athens' accusers. Since Athens' accusers included many men—and many historians—of Grote's own time, it is no surprise that his *History* did not make him universally popular.<sup>114</sup> But it did exercise a huge influence, not only on modern views of Athens, but on the modern theory of democracy itself, and it is with a brief sketch of this impact that this essay will close.

#### 4 The Impact of Grote's Athens

In truth, there is space here for the examination only of one strand of Grote's influence. This is partly because various other strands of his influence are within the territory of other contributors to this volume, and partly because Grote's influence on subsequent academic writers has already been treated, with unsurpassed elegance, by Arnaldo Momigliano, in a lecture published

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<sup>113</sup> Grote, *History of Greece*, 6.37.

<sup>114</sup> It goes without saying that Grote's contemporary opponents were not identical with Athens' ideological opponents of previous ages, still less were they members of the historical societies whose crimes Grote is often eager to highlight in his *History*. The Christian and conservative intellectuals of Grote's own day were hardly participants in the reaction to the "Popish Plot" of 1678–9; and yet, for Grote, they are often implicated in the same tradition. "The uniform tendency of Christian legislation, down to a recent period," he declares "leaves no room for reproaching the Athenians with excessive cruelty" (7.248). This telescoping of the many centuries of Christian history is partly a product of the long perspective afforded by Grote's survey of Greek history; but it is equally part of the rhetoric of Grote's work.

sixty years ago now.<sup>115</sup> But it is also because nowhere is the impact of Grote's Athens in particular more visible than in its influence on the liberal democratic tradition, especially as carried forward by John Stuart Mill. And it is arguable that Grote's *History* deserves commemoration less for its impact on academic history writing than for the impetus it lent to the wider intellectual project of defending and advancing democracy as a practical ideal.<sup>116</sup>

We have perhaps already heard enough of the criticisms directed at Grote from the academy. But it is worth beginning this section by quoting a final passage by one of Grote's most eloquent critics, Julius Beloch, if only because it once again reminds us of what academic readers found most problematic about the English banker's *History*:

The Greeks are for Grote no more than disguised Englishmen from the middle of the 19th century. And since the author belonged to the liberals, the Greek democrats are always right and the oligarchs always wrong; Grote's history becomes a glorification of the Athenian democracy. As a reaction against the underestimation of that democracy, which was common down to that time, this was completely justified and useful; but it is just as unhistorical as the opposite conception. It is surprising that Grote, who was involved in economic affairs, showed no understanding of such matters. Among the present generation Grote has received unbounded admiration, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries, where his history is still considered a standard work, but also in the liberal movement in Germany. But scholarship is the like the ancient Kronos, it devours its own children, and Grote has not escaped this fate, which looms before us all.<sup>117</sup>

115 Momigliano, *George Grote and the Study of Greek History*, his inaugural address at University College London, 1952. For the importance of this address (and an attempt to move beyond it) see now Ceserani, "Modern Histories of Ancient Greece."

116 For Grote's impact on the British utilitarian tradition, see also Avlami, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae* . . .," 156–7.

117 Quoted in Chambers, "Grote's *History of Greece*," 19–20. Contrast the view of François de Champagny, for whom Grote's position in a still "aristocratic" England undermined his pretensions to radicalism. For de Champagny, indeed, Grote's Athens could afford to be so gloriously democratic not because it was a reflection of contemporary London, but because of the great gulf of time that separated it from contemporary London. "Pendant que nous autres, en France, nous nous débattons contre les revolutions . . . en Angleterre, on a l'esprit tellement libre . . . qu'un homme politique, un membre du Parlement, un radical passe son temps à étudier la politique d'Athènes . . . Je vois ici un trait de cette sécurité goguenarde en vertu de laquelle . . . on affecte là-bas non seulement de

In imagining that his own work would one day be covered by the sands of time, Beloch was undoubtedly correct; whether his condemnation of Grote to a similar fate has turned out to be correct is less certain. But he clearly identifies the chief criticism of Grote's Athens: there was too much of Grote in it, and too little of Athens.

Beloch's criticism is slightly unfair: although Grote's text does act as a corrective to previous anti-democratic accounts of Greek history, he is often (as in his account of Cleon) more balanced than we might expect, and we should remember that his view did not have to be extreme to be perceived as such in comparison with the norm set by his predecessors.<sup>118</sup> All the same, Beloch puts his finger upon a central weakness of Grote's approach: in organizing his defence of the Athenians around a rehabilitation of their character, Grote lay himself open to the charge that for him, all democrats were good democrats. In his defence of Grote, fellow liberal Edward Freeman tries to offset this impression by laying emphasis on Grote's comparative method:

A fair examination of Grecian history will assuredly lead us to the conclusion that this mob clothed with executive functions made one of the best governments which the world ever saw. It did not work impossibilities; it did not change earth into paradise nor men into angels; it did not forestall all the improvement which has since appeared in the world; still less did it forestall all the improvements which we may trust are yet in store for mankind. But that government cannot be called a bad one which is better than any government of its own time. And surely that government must be called a good one which is a marked improvement upon every government which has gone before it.

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ne pas craindre les revolutions mais de les aimer. On nous fait compliment de toutes nos émeutes; on se prend d'enthousiasme pour toutes nos insurrections... Et pour que le livre en question nous arrive... avec plus forte teinte d'ironie, l'auteur, au milieu de l'aristocratique Angleterre, s'y pose en démocrate. A deux mille deux cents ans de distance, l'admiration est peu dangereuse." *Le Correspondant* 28 (1851): 385–413, quoted in Avlami, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae*...", 155.

118 Strictly, Beloch's argument here is not that Grote was too democratic, but that he was unhistorical. But this claim can hardly be established—as Beloch seems to believe it can—simply by pointing out that Grote was a democrat.

For Freeman, Grote did not claim that democracy made men into angels; it was just that it fared very well when compared to most other systems of government in the historical record.<sup>119</sup>

But the element of character in Grote's account of Athenian democracy would prove more enduring than Freeman supposed. We have already seen how J.S. Mill in his review of the *History* was quick to pick up on the ideas about character that (I have argued) were a crucial part of the theory behind Grote's rehabilitation of Athenian democracy. In what remains of this chapter, I want to draw attention to the presence of the same idea in a more significant part of Mill's *oeuvre*, his 1861 essay *Considerations On Representative Government*. Urbinati has already explored the connection between Grote's remarks on the *nomothetai* and Mill's advocacy of certain restraints on popular sovereignty.<sup>120</sup> This aligns Grote with the more republican strain in Mill's thinking and in the liberal tradition more generally. As a complement but also a corrective, I want to suggest here that Grote's *History* is responsible for some of the more radically participatory parts of Mill's democratic theory, and that his influence can be thus be seen to have been just as *democratic* (in the sense of advocating popular sovereignty) as it was *liberal* (in the sense of calling for limits on state power).<sup>121</sup>

119 Quoted in Roberts, *Athens on Trial*, 248.

120 Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy*.

121 Grote's successor Louis Ménard (for whom see n. 18 above, Avlami, "From *Historia Magistra Vitae* . . .," 158–62) is in many ways an interesting comparison (though I do not have time to develop the comparison at any length here). Ménard represents an even more radical version of Grote, in that his use of Athens to criticize modern "democratic" institutions is markedly sharper. Radical though he was, Grote was largely content to pursue democratic aims within the evolving representative institutions of his homeland; Ménard's rhetoric is more revolutionary. Ménard's democracy is primarily the direct democracy of Rousseau, not the representative democracy of the Mills. For this last point, note the clear echo of Rousseau (*Contrat Social*, 134, "Le peuple Anglais pense être libre . . .") in Ménard's complaint that "un Grec ne serait pas cru libre parce qu'il aurait pu, tous les six ou sept ans, déposer dans une urne électorale le nom des députés . . ." (unremarked by Avlami, but cf. her conclusion, 162: "With Ménard, in any case, Rousseauian democracy finally finds a name: Athens.") Part of Grote's achievement, then, was to present participatory democracy in a form that was (at least occasionally) acceptable to one of the central streams of British thought.

Note that H.O. Pappé, "The English Utilitarians and Athenian Democracy," in Bolgar, *Classical Influences on Western Thought*, 295–307, despite its title, focuses quite narrowly on the Platonism of J.S. Mill.

Finally, my argument that Grote's work on character helped push Mill (at times) in a particularly participatory direction is not meant to show that Mill derived his ideas

Most of Mill's remarks on democracy and character are contained in the famous third chapter, in which he raises the spectre of the perfectly virtuous despot, asking whether there would be anything objectionable about government by a single enlightened man (supposing it were possible). As most students of political philosophy will remember, Mill's answer is ultimately an Aristotelian one: a perfectly virtuous despot would still be objectionable, in that his unlimited power would be depriving all other citizens of the opportunity (and motivation) to develop certain moral and intellectual capacities associated with political activity.<sup>122</sup> What most of us forget is that Mill's description of these moral capacities is couched in terms of the suitability of various forms of government to various ethnicities: so Oriental peoples, who are characterized by inactivity, are suited to despotism.<sup>123</sup> In the case of the French, despotism (in a neat circularity) and Catholicism have "made submission and endurance the common character of the people."<sup>124</sup> This is contrasted with "the striving, go-ahead character" of England and the United States which is "the foundation of the best hopes for the general improvement of mankind."

In a sentence reminiscent of Macaulay as much as Grote, Mill concludes that "the passive type of character is favoured by the government of one or a few, and the active self-helping type by that of the Many."<sup>125</sup> At the same time (and here Grote's ideas are to the fore), one of the main means by which a passive character can be transformed into an active one is through participation in political institutions. Infusing Grote's idea of character with a cerebral element of his own (an element already present in his *Logic*), Mill declares that "the practice of the dicastery and the ecclesia raised the intellectual standard of an average Athenian citizen far beyond anything of which there is yet an

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on character entirely from Grote. Mill's ideas on character were developing as early as the 1830s, and were by the *System of Logic* of 1843 fully-formed. What Grote may have provided his friend in his *History* was an empirical basis for this theory. His observations on the Athenian past may also have encouraged Mill's views on the peculiarly character-forming qualities of *participatory* institutions in particular.

122 For a recent re-statement of Mill's answer, see J. Ober, "Natural Capacities and Democracy as a Good in Itself," *Philosophical Studies* 132 (2007): 59–73. The importance of this response to the liberal tradition can be gauged by the incorporation of a version of it in J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), Chapter 65, "The Aristotelian Principle," with reference to Mill's *Utilitarianism* in n. 20.

123 This is however noticed by E. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Routledge, 1978), 14. For "Orientals," J.S. Mill, "On Representative Government," in *On Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1861/1991), 250.

124 Mill, "On Representative Government," 250.

125 Ibid., 252 (last two quotations).

example in any other mass of men, ancient or modern." Indeed, "a benefit of the same kind" can be observed in "Englishmen of the lower middle class by their liability to be placed on juries and to serve parish offices."<sup>126</sup>

We might expect the argumentative momentum that Mill has built up in this chapter to carry him towards an outright endorsement of a strong form of participatory government. The penultimate sentence of the chapter looks close to such an endorsement, but the final sentence immediately brings us back down to the everyday terrain of government by representation:

From these accumulated considerations it is evident, that the only government which can fully satisfy all the exigencies of the social state, is one in which the whole people participate; that any participation, even in the smallest public function, is useful; that the participation should everywhere be as great as the general degree of improvement of the community will allow; and that nothing less can be ultimately desirable, than the admission of all to a share in the sovereign power of the state. But since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of the public business, it follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative.<sup>127</sup>

Mill's last-minute climb-down is embarrassingly sudden. The philosopher does, of course, argue extensively for limited government elsewhere in his essay. What is remarkable is how far the argument from democratic character has driven him towards a radical participatory vision of democracy he usually shied away from.

Grote's Athens, then, was a revolutionary one. It was revolutionary in overturning centuries of historical prejudice against Athens' democracy, in providing the definitive response to Tory writers like Mitford, and in giving a fillip to liberal democratic theorists such as J.S. Mill. But it achieved its revolutionary aims partly through the use of staple nineteenth-century ideas about character. Grote's Athens was one in which the democratic villains of the past were rehabilitated and in which the heroic figures of aristocratic historiography were exposed as fully deserving of their fates. Grote's Athens was one in which individual character and political institutions were joined in a loop of recursive causality, each feeding into the other. The heritage of Grote's Athens today is plain to see in the growing impact of positive portrayals of Athens on

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 256.



contemporary democratic theory and discourse.<sup>128</sup> The challenge of Grote's Athens for us is that we would like to affirm (to a great extent) its democratic credentials and its considerable successes, while also dispensing with the idea of character to which both of these were, for our historian, inseparably bound. It is up to us, it would seem, to see if these ideas can be separated; or if, failing that, we can construct a new conception of the character of democracy that breaks free of the racism and condescension of Grote's.<sup>129</sup>

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128 The literature on Athenian democracy and modern democracy is large and growing: for a recent review of work on the subject in the fields of ancient history, political theory, and political science, see J. Ober, "What the Ancient Greeks Can Tell Us about Democracy," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 67–91.

129 The centrality of moral character to Grote's idea of democracy was largely a product of his intellectual environment. At the same time, it was partly derived from a reading of Plato and Aristotle (for both these points, see note 28 above). Grote's views of these thinkers are beyond the scope of this essay, but there is time for me to hazard a further hypothesis in closing. Grote associated Plato and Aristotle with the vibrant culture of democratic Athens. If he had read them in a more radically critical light (cf. e.g. Ober, *Political Dissent*), he may have been led to reject these philosophers' coupling of individual character and types of state. All the same, as I have suggested, the notion that democracy and character are linked via institutions is one that perhaps deserves renewed attention (see n. 19), although not in Grote's precise formulation of the idea.

One way of reincorporating a version of Grote's theory into contemporary debates is to view his character-based theory as an unsophisticated precursor of the modern theory of social capital. In the theory of social capital, participation in associations improves citizen sociability through a range of mechanisms (e.g. diffusion of norms, creation of trust networks). Increased citizen sociability or social capital then improves the functioning of democratic institutions (R. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993 is the seminal study). This improves upon Grote's theory in several ways (not least, by dispensing with 19th-century notions of race) while retaining the central insight that democracy is a social as well as a political phenomenon.

For racism in Grote, see e.g. 12.110, n. 1. In the main text, Grote passes on the report of Xenophon that Cyrus the Younger would often have recourse to bodily mutilation as a form of punishment. In the note, Grote adds that "similar habits have always prevailed among Orientals" and then cites in support of this contention the *History of British India* of James Mill.

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# The Comparative Approach in Grote's *History of Greece*

Peter Liddel

## 1 Introduction

Historical research is enlivened, enriched, and its implications broadened by comparative analysis; at its best, it can help the historian reflect critically upon his or her culturally-inherited perspectives. Particularly apt where the society under study is distant, appears alien, or where sources are limited or one-sided, it is a well-trodden approach to the history of the Greeks. It is well-known in the forms developed by *Annaliste* historians of the twentieth century, but, given its importance to Montesquieu, Marx, Weber, Spengler, Bloch, and others, its long history is recognized.<sup>1</sup> As Weber suggested, comparative studies are best put to use not to identify analogies or parallels, but to “identify and define the individuality of each development, the characteristics which made the one conclude in a manner so different from that of the other.”<sup>2</sup> The drawing of comparison, parallel or analogy between different ages is a mode of argument that was deployed in antiquity,<sup>3</sup> and was used extensively,

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- 1 The comparative method of *Annaliste* historians had its origins in late nineteenth-century sociology, but owed a lot to the methods of ancient historians like Glotz and Fustel de Coulanges. See Arnaldo D. Momigliano, *Studies on Modern Scholarship*, ed. G.W. Bowersock and T.J. Cornell (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1994), especially 161–78; on its role in modern historiography, see Jörn Rüsen, “Some Theoretical Approaches to Intercultural Comparative Historiography,” *History and Theory* 35.4 (1996): 5–22. On its role in sociology, see Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). On modern attempts to assess ancient imperialism through the comparative approach, see Thomas Harrison, “Ancient and Modern Imperialism,” *G&R* 55 (2008): 1–22; Phiroze Vasunia, “The Comparative Study of Empires,” *JRS* 101 (2011): 222–37.
  - 2 Max Weber, “[Concluding Note on Method],” *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*, trans. R.I. Frank (London: Verso, 1998), 385.
  - 3 François Hartog, “From Parallel to Comparison (or, Life and Death of Parallel),” in *Applied Classics*, ed. Angelos Chaniotis, Annika Kuhn and Christina Kuhn (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2009), 15–26.

in the formulation of perspectives on antiquity, by writers before the twentieth century. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the tendency to compare ancient and modern forms of socialisation and organisation was an aspect of the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*.<sup>4</sup> By the late eighteenth century, historians and political writers compared the classical and modern worlds in order to point out resemblances and differences between them.<sup>5</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, comparanda were drawn by those who took the view that human history was made up of successions of civilisation, the comparison of which would lead to critical insights into their nature.<sup>6</sup> The emergence, in that era, of notions of progress and modernity led historians to consider critically the value and realize the historicism of the comparative approach:<sup>7</sup> before Grote, therefore, comparison was well-established in the field of ancient Greek history and had been deployed by those whose primary interests, like Benjamin Constant, were political; by those composing narrative histories of Greece, like Connop Thirlwall; and by those who, like William Mitford or John Gillies, wrote histories with a pronounced political agenda.<sup>8</sup>

4 Joseph M. Levene, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (New York: Cornell University, 1991).

5 Hartog, "From Parallel," 22–5. For a lucid formulation of the construction of the relationship between antiquity and modernity in eighteenth-century political thought, see Kostas Vlassopoulos, "The construction of antiquity and modernity in the eighteenth century: alterity, proximity, distantiation, immanency," in *Intentional History. Spinning Time in Ancient Greece*, ed. Lin Foxhall, Hans-Joachim Gehrke and Nino Luraghi (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2010), 341–60: the modes of distantiation, alterity, proximity, and immanency are all visible in Grote's *History*. See also, on comparison and the gauging of progress, Chryssanthi Avlami, "Le modèle antique à l'épreuve du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: réflexions sur l'analogie, la différenciation et l'Histoire," 51–65 in *Historiographie de l'antiquité et transferts culturels. Les histoires anciennes dans l'Europe des XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, ed. Chryssanthi Avlami et al. (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2010). For the role of ideas about antiquity in the construction and critique of modernity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Neville Morley, *Antiquity and Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009).

6 See Duncan Forbes, "Historicism in England," *Cambridge Review* 4 (1950–51): 387–400. For the view that classical Greece was analogous to the contemporary world, see Thomas Arnold, *Thucydides. The History of the Peloponnesian War*, vol. 2, 2nd edition (Oxford: University Press, 1852), xxi–xxiv.

7 Avlami, "Le modèle," 65.

8 Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns," in *Benjamin Constant. Political Writings*, ed. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: University Press, 1988), 309–28; Peter Liddel, *Bishop Thirlwall's History of Greece* (Bristol: Phoenix Press, 2007), esp. xxi–xxvi; William Mitford, *A History of Greece*, 10 volumes, 3rd edition (London: T. Cadell, 1821–2); John Gillies, *A View of the Reign of Frederic II of Prussia, with a Parallel between that Prince and Philip II of Macedon* (London: A. Strahan, 1789).



Grote's *History's* deployment of the comparative method, therefore, comes as no surprise.<sup>9</sup>

The method had a high profile among those within Grote's intellectual milieu: James Mill, whose *History of British India* of 1826 appears to have been influential on Grote's work, rated comparison as one of those "powers of most importance . . . for extracting the precious ore from a great mine of rude historical materials."<sup>10</sup> Alexander Bain, editor of Grote's posthumously-published papers,<sup>11</sup> in his epistemological study *The Senses and the Intellect*, also rated them highly: "comparisons are seldom barren efforts of the identifying faculty; they are usually employed for some end of mutual illustration, or in order to infer in the one all the good or bad features belonging to the other."<sup>12</sup> Bain emphasised their instructiveness in clarifying particular phenomena: "The narrower the field of view contemplated, the more chance there is of hitting upon a real and instructive comparison. Take the following from Grote's *History of Greece*. . . ."<sup>13</sup> Pointing to Grote's explanation of beliefs about the Spartan constitution and the emergence of Greek legends, he was struck by his sensitivity in their deployment. He was not alone in his admiration: William Smith, in his 1856 review of Grote's *History*, observed that "readers of his volumes will obtain a vast fund of information upon many subjects which they would never have expected to find in a work devoted to Grecian history."<sup>14</sup> The comparative approach went on to play an important role in nineteenth-century epistemology: John Stuart Mill endorsed its role both in logic and in research on the natural sciences.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the writer of the Introduction to the

9 George Grote, *A History of Greece*, 12 volumes (London: Dent, 1906).

10 The other powers, in full, were "combination, discrimination, classification, judgement, comparison, weighing, inferring, inducting, philosophising": James Mill, *A History of British India*, 3rd edition (London: Baldwin, 1826) volume 1, xii. On the importance of James Mill's work to the intellectual project of Grote's *History*, see John Vaio, "George Grote and James Mill: How to Write History," in *George Grote Reconsidered: A 200th Birthday Celebration with a First Edition of his Essay "Of the Athenian Government,"* ed. William M. Calder, III and Stephen Trzaskoma (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1996), 59–74.

11 See Alexander Bain, *The Minor Works of George Grote* (London: John Murray, 1873), containing, at 66–103, Bain's critical survey of Grote's *History*, first published in 1846, noting Grote's attention to comparative examples at 66, 72–3, 75, 84, 87.

12 Alexander Bain, *The Senses and the Intellect*, 3rd edition (London: Longmans, Green, 1855), 504.

13 Bain, *Senses*, 504–5.

14 William Smith, "Grote's *History of Greece*," *Quarterly Review* 99 (1856): 60–105 at 69; cf. his account of Grote's parallels at 69–71.

15 See John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic. Ratiocinative and Inductive* (London: Longman, 1970), 253–66 and 364–7 on the "Methods of Agreement and Difference" and the use of analogy.

1906 edition of Grote's *History*, A.D. Lindsay, was uncomfortable with Grote's approach, identifying a "fault of reading the prejudices and passions of modern politics into ancient history" in his history.<sup>16</sup>

Recent assessments have been mixed: Roberts and Macgregor Morris assert, given his criticisms of Mitford's blurring of ancient and modern political systems, that Grote's deployment of parallels was hypocritical. This assessment is fair only on the most superficial of levels. Demetriou, however, offers a perspective upon which this article will build: that that by deploying analogies with modern European history Grote enunciated the view that "human nature is essentially the same in all ages, and as the same causes always tend to produce the same effects, many modern events could throw light on those of antiquity and vice versa."<sup>17</sup>

Grote made explicit claims about the potential of the comparative approach. In one letter of 14th January, 1823, he advertised his research into the "fabulous ages of Greece," which "I find will require to be illustrated by bringing together a large mass of analogical matter from other early histories, in order to show the entire uncertainty and worthlessness of tales to which early associations have so long familiarised all classical minds."<sup>18</sup> In the preface to the first two volumes of 1846, Grote expressed this same intention to "illustrate" the legendary age of the Greeks "by comparison with the like mental habit in early modern Europe."<sup>19</sup> This notion was extended in his preface to the second edition of volumes I and II, when he acknowledged the suggestion made in John Stewart Mill's review of 1846,<sup>20</sup> of the relevance of Sleeman's description "of the state of mind now actually prevalent among the native population of Hindostan," which, he maintained, "presents a vivid comparison, helping the modern reader to understand and appreciate the legendary aera of Greece":<sup>21</sup> the point

16 A.D. Lindsay, "Introduction," in G. Grote, *A History of Greece*, 12 volumes, (London: Dent, 1906), vii–xiv at vii.

17 Jennifer T. Roberts, *Athens on Trial. The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 243; Ian Macgregor Morris, "Navigating the Grotesque; or, Rethinking Greek Historiography," in *Reinventing History. The Enlightenment Origins of Ancient History*, ed. James Moore et al. (London: IHR, 2008), 247–90, at 273; Kyriakos Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 77–9.

18 Harriet Grote, *Posthumous Papers of George Grote* (London: W. Clowes, 1874), 20.

19 Grote, *History*, I.xix.

20 John Stuart Mill, "Grote's *History of Greece*," in *Essays on Philosophy and the Classics*, ed. James Robson and Francis Sparshott (Toronto: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 288 and 290.

21 Grote, *History*, I.xxiii–xxiv.

of "illustration" in this case is to induct the reader to a state of familiarity with a very different world.

But there was another motivation, which he proposed in his 1826 critique of Mitford's work, when he set out the duty of the historian: "to survey the general characteristics of society among the people of whom he treats, and to ascertain the comparative degree of civilization which their habits and institutions evince them to have reached."<sup>22</sup> Mitford, on the other hand, he wrote, had "contributed nothing towards a systematic description, and comparative estimate in the scale of nations . . . an author who leaves the intellectual philosophy of the Greeks unexplored, cannot assuredly convey even the faintest idea of the rank which they occupy in the scale of human improvement."<sup>23</sup> As we shall see, this intention, to place Greek civilisation on the "scale of nations," comes across most strongly in the first two volumes.<sup>24</sup>

Grote had further ambitions: the identification of "resemblance as well as contrast," which would contribute towards the creation of a *History* that was improving to reason and was instructive for the present:

Not omitting the points of resemblance as well as of contrast with the better-known forms of modern society, he will especially study to exhibit the spontaneous movement of Greek intellect, sometimes aided but never borrowed from without, and lighting up a small portion of a world otherwise clouded and stationary. He will develop the action of that social system, which, while ensuring to the mass of freemen a degree of protection elsewhere unknown, acted as a stimulus to the creative impulses of genius, and left the superior minds sufficiently unshackled to soar above religious and political routine, to overshoot their own age, and to become the teachers of posterity.<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly, therefore, Grote's own writings suggest four motivations behind his use of comparison: first, the didactic, to show how the Athenians may be viewed as "teachers of posterity"; second and third, the idea of "illustration," which refers both to demonstrating the fictional nature of early legend, but also the task of communicating to the reader a sense of familiarity with a different world; and, fourth, to assess their place in the scale of civilisations. How

<sup>22</sup> The essay was published as a review of Clinton's *Fasti Hellenici*: George Grote, "Institutions of Ancient Greece," *Westminster Review* 5 (April 1826): 269–331, at 280.

<sup>23</sup> Grote "Institutions," 281.

<sup>24</sup> Forbes, "Historicismus," 399 suggests that Grote set this aim aside.

<sup>25</sup> Grote, *History*, I.xvi.

far, I shall ask, did Grote's use of comparisons fulfil these stated intentions, and did his use of comparative example go beyond them?

In this chapter, I intend to assess Grote's use of comparisons with a view to explaining their overall contribution to his *History*. I shall survey his use of comparisons in relation to a number of important themes (treatment of myth (section 2); source analysis (3); comparative ethnography (4); assessment of monarchy and tyranny (5); portrayals of early Athens and classical Athenian democracy (6–8); perspectives on religion and on military history (9–10)). Finally (section 11), I shall ask whether there is detectable a coherent agenda to Grote's use of parallels, and whether it corresponds to his openly-expressed methodological statements.

## 2 Greek Myth and Early Greece

In his 1843 *Westminster Review* article on Niebuhr's *Griechische Heroen Geschichten*, an account of heroic legends of Greece "prepared by Niebuhr himself for the special purpose of being recounted to his son," Grote set out many of his ideas on early Greek history, commending Niebuhr's distinction between legend and historical reality and "his piercing eye for the detection of latent analogies."<sup>26</sup> Grote founded his view upon comparative analysis, assessing the elevating nature of accounts of miracles to the "primitive hearers of the Iliad, at the festivals of [for instance] Smyrna or Chios, in the eighth century before the Christian era" by comparison to the emotive role of accounts of supernatural events and superhuman agency in early Jewish history.<sup>27</sup> This review was a prolegomenon to the views expressed in the first two volumes of his history, published in 1846, which were devoted entirely to "legendary

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26 George Grote, "Grecian Legends and Early History," *Westminster Review* 39 (1843): 285–328 at 285–6. Some of the principles according to which he would treat early myth are outlined in his unpublished essay on magic of 1820: see John Vaio, "Seventy Years before The Golden Bough: George Grote's Unpublished Essay on 'Magick,'" in *The Cambridge Ritualists Reconsidered*, ed. William M. Calder III (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 263–74, at 271 and George Grote "Essay on Magick," in *The Cambridge Ritualists Reconsidered*, 275–95. On the significance of Grote's treatment of myth, see Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1981), 87–94.

27 Grote, "Grecian Legends," 297–300.

Greece"; chapters 1–15 offer a descriptive account of those myths; chapters 16–21 turn to their interpretation which extended the views set out in 1843.<sup>28</sup>

In those first 15 chapters, Grote rarely made use of historical comparison, doing so only to demonstrate the absurdity of drawing historical data from legend: in one footnote, he exposed the confusion that underlay Napoleon's elaborate military criticisms on the capture of Troy, and at the same time took Grotius to task for considering Odysseus "to have sinned against the rules of international law."<sup>29</sup> Nor, Grote maintained, should myths be used for geographical identification, dismissing those who "fixed the exact locality of the floating island of Aeolus or the rocks of the Sirens" as equivalent, "in the present state of geographical knowledge," to "that man who after reading *Gulliver's Travels* went to look in his map for Lilliput."<sup>30</sup>

Grote deployed comparative examples more extensively as hermeneutic devices in his interpretative chapters. Chapter 16, entitled "Grecian Mythes, as understood, felt and interpreted by the Greeks themselves," took the view that "to understand properly then the Grecian myths, we must try to identify ourselves with the state of mind of the original mythopoeic age." A well-established approach, of which Grote was cognizant, was Vico's analogy between the "early stages of civilisation and the childhood of the individual."<sup>31</sup> But a more active ingredient in Grote's analysis of myth was his pursuit of parallels between Greek legend and oral traditions of other cultures: he drew upon Grimm's views on *Sage* (saga) to establish the importance of religious belief in the generation of legends.<sup>32</sup> Equally crucial to the foundation of Grote's perspective was his citation of Ampère's opinion of legend as "a special product of the intellect, not capable of being correctly designated either as history, or as fiction, or as philosophy."<sup>33</sup> Comparative study provided the basis for the working out of this broad view but also for disproving the historical veracity of particular legends: to the story that the Vale of Tempe contained a lake miraculously drained by Poseidon he offered parallel traditions from South America

28 For his view of early Greece, see George Huxley, "George Grote on Early Greece," in *George Grote Reconsidered: A 200th Birthday Celebration with a First Edition of his Essay "Of the Athenian Government,"* ed. William M. Calder, III and Stephen Trzaskoma (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1996), 23–42.

29 Grote, *History*, 1.288 n. 3.

30 Grote, *History*, 1.213.

31 Grote, *History*, 2.10 with n. 1. On Vico, see Forbes, "Historicism" and Huxley, "George Grote."

32 Grote, *History*, 2.12 n. 1; 94.

33 Grote, *History*, 2.15 n. 1.

and the Caspian Sea area as an example of “the manner in which conjectures, derived from local configuration or peculiarities, are often made to assume the form of *traditions*.”<sup>34</sup>

The idea, in Grote’s view a misconception,<sup>35</sup> that Greek legend could be used to recreate the historical past, was challenged by reference to parallels drawn from studies of myths in other cultures: he drew upon Sleeman’s analysis of Hindu traditions, Lyttleton’s analysis of the tales of the Irish bards, and Johnson’s account of stories of the Highlanders.<sup>36</sup> Myths may well contain references to real events, “but such matter of fact cannot be verified by any intrinsic mark. . . . We are not warranted in applying to the mythical world the rules either of historical credibility or chronological sequence.”<sup>37</sup> Only if there is “adequate contemporary testimony” (as there is, he observed, for the age of the Crusades) can legend be considered as a basis for historical understanding.<sup>38</sup> Grote drew the conclusion that though myths might contain truths, it was impossible to discriminate the factual from the fictitious elements. Furthermore, he challenged Creuzer’s allegoric interpretation of myth—which hypothesised that myths were symbolic representations of physical and historical knowledge—both by reference to a number of studies of Greek myth and also to Halhed’s critique of such an interpretation of Hindu mythology.<sup>39</sup>

Grote’s views on myth were extended in chapter 17, “The Grecian Mythical Vein compared with that of modern Europe,” in which he returned to his assessment of the processes that gave rise to myth (*mythopoiesis*). This chapter proceeded from the idea that “popular narrative talk, which the Germans express by the significant word *Sage* or *Voks-Sage*, in a greater or less degree of perfection or development, is a phaenomenon common to almost all stages of society and to almost all quarters of the globe and especially among the Teutonic and Celtic populations of Early Europe.”<sup>40</sup> The identification of commonalities in the process of *mythopoiesis* led Grote to isolate the distinctive features of Greek legends: both their “abundance, beauty, and the unparalleled long continuance of early Grecian poetry” and the “self-operated” transition of

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34 Grote, *History*, 2.50 n. 1.

35 As expressed vehemently in his attack on Clinton’s *Fasti Hellenici* in his review of Niebuhr: Grote, “Grecian Legends.”

36 Grote, *History*, 2.76 n. 1; 77 n. 1; 79 n. 1.

37 Grote, *History*, 2.94. These were positions were taken up by Grote in his “Grecian Legends” review.

38 Grote, *History*, 2.75.

39 Grote, *History*, 2.83 n. 1.

40 Grote, *History*, 2.103–4.

the Greek mind from a poetical to a positive state" (that is, the passage from Homer to Thucydides).<sup>41</sup> The experiences of other poetic cultures were quite different: the processes of Romanisation and the onset of Christianity led to the degrading of North European mythical heroes as "daemons, magicians, elves, fairies and other supernatural agents."<sup>42</sup>

The need for a mythical narrative, Grote argued, pervaded many cultures: in the middle ages the legends of the Catholic Saints and the Romances of Chivalry corresponded to the "saintly ideal" and the "chivalrous idea." Accordingly, Grote presented a view according to which the history of Jesus Christ, as described in the Gospels and the biographies of the Catholic saints, was the product of the same mythopoeic tendency of the age in which Greek legends were created. At the same time, moreover, Romantic narrative poetry, consisting of the tales of Arthur, of Charlemagne, and of the Niebelungen represent the "chivalrous idea" of "the same mythopoeic vein."<sup>43</sup> Grote's assertion of the impossibility of extracting historical truths from ancient Greek legends was re-iterated by reference to the treatment both of Christian legend and the mythical past of England:

In a dispute which took place during the reign of Edward I (AD 1301) between England and Scotland, the descent of the kings of England from Brute the Trojan was solemnly embodied in a document put forth to sustain the rights of the crown of England, as an argument bearing on the case then in discussion: and it passed without attack from the opposing party,—an incident which reminds us of the appeal made by Aeschines, in the contention between the Athenians and Philip of Macedon respecting Amphipolis, to the primitive dotal rights of Akamas son of Theseus.<sup>44</sup>

Grote, then, offered "rules of evidence,"<sup>45</sup> concluding, at the end of this chapter, that the "two courses, and two only, are open; either to pass over the myths altogether, which is the way in which modern historians treat the old British fables—or else to give an account of them as myths; to recognise and respect their specific nature, and to abstain from confounding them with ordinary and certifiable history."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Grote, *History*, 2.104–5.

<sup>42</sup> Grote, *History*, 2.109.

<sup>43</sup> Grote, *History*, 2.110–15.

<sup>44</sup> Grote, *History*, 2.121–2.

<sup>45</sup> Grote, *History*, 2.124.

<sup>46</sup> Grote, *History*, 2. 126.



Grote's view on the composition of the Homeric poems—that they were transmitted orally until the historical era—was vital to his interpretation of them. The delusory ancient Greek belief in a single author of the Homeric poems was explained by comparison to the role of the Sage Vyasa in Hindu mythology.<sup>47</sup> To understand and explain Homeric poetry, Grote asserted the importance of considering its earliest audience, who (paralleled by reference to early German song, French Carolingian epic, contemporary poetry in Greek and Persia, and traditions among in the Kalmuk, Basque, Togalese and Icelandic peoples)<sup>48</sup> were to be understood as prone to “susceptibilities and capacities common to the human bosom in every stage of progressive culture.”<sup>49</sup>

In chapters 16, 17 and (less extensively) 19, parallels were deployed as a critical force, in order to make a case against the value of looking for historical truth from mythology.<sup>50</sup> But chapter 20 embarked upon a different approach:

Though the particular persons and events, chronicled in the legendary poems of Greece, are not to be regarded as belonging to the province of real history, those poems are nevertheless full of instruction as pictures of life and manners; and the very same circumstances which divest their composers of all credibility as historians, render them so much the more valuable as unconscious expositors of their own contemporary society. While professedly describing an uncertified past, their combinations are involuntarily borrowed from the surrounding present.<sup>51</sup>

Grote set out the “state of society and manners” of Greek communities of the “legendary age” as a way of showing how it partly foreshadows, and partly forms a contrast to, the subsequent ages.<sup>52</sup> This gave rise to a descriptive account; among his devices for substantiating his view of these as historical snapshots were historical parallels drawn from other cultures.

The opening sections of chapter 20 concerned political organisation. The tendency of hereditary monarchs in epic to frequently receive gifts “to avert his enmity, to conciliate his favour” was paralleled by reference to the revenue of the Persian kings before Darius, but also the “free gifts” of the European

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47 Grote, *History*, 2.245 n. 1.

48 Grote, *History*, 2.251 n. 2; 256; 259.

49 Grote, *History*, 2.311. On Grote and the Homeric question, Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 142–4.

50 Chapter 19 challenged Clinton's attempt to form a chronology on the basis of Greek legend: for an application of analogy, see Grote, *History*, 2.171.

51 Grote, *History*, 2.178.

52 Grote, *History*, 2.180.

kingships of the middle ages and the old French monarchy.<sup>53</sup> Some pages later, the Elders sitting on stone seats (described at *Iliad* 18.504), arbitrating in a dispute, were paralleled with the representations in "old northern Sagas" of "old men assembled for the purpose of judging as sitting on great stones in a circle called the *Urtheilsring* or *Gerichtsring*."<sup>54</sup> The condition of the king in "primitive Greece" was also elucidated by reference to Volney's description of emirs in Syria: "everything depends on circumstances: if the governor be a man of ability, he is absolute;—if weak, he is a cipher. This proceeds from the want of fixed laws; a want common to all Asia."<sup>55</sup> His comparison of legendary phenomena to a non-European institution emerges also in his illustration of the role of the Homeric *demioergoi*, by reference to the wide roles of *officers and servants* in Mill's *History of British India*:<sup>56</sup> but of course this comparison was one loaded with the connotations of imperial administration.

Grote then turned to the "state of moral and social feeling." Comparison formed the basis of a view of the Greeks of the heroic age as relatively sedate.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, their morality and customs were held to be primitive: the practice of partible inheritance was compared with "the primitive German law of succession."<sup>58</sup> The morality of social life is also paralleled: "feelings—of mutual devotion between kinsmen and companions in arms—of general hospitality to the stranger, and of helping protection to the suppliant—constitute the bright spots in a dark age. We find them very generally prevalent amongst communities essentially rude and barbarous—amongst the ancient Germans as described by Tacitus, the Druses in Lebanon, the Arabian tribes in the desert, and even the North American Indians," a statement that is supported by an extended footnote offering "features of resemblance to Homeric manners."<sup>59</sup>

Another feature which Grote considers that of a primitive, pre-state, society was the practice of allowing private compromise or vengeance in the settlement of homicide cases. This, he wrote, "has been remarked in many rude communities, and is particularly memorable among the early German tribes," and offered examples from India and among indigenous Americans.<sup>60</sup> The aim of such legislation was to forestall the escalation of standing feuds, while

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53 Grote, *History*, 2.182 n. 1.

54 Grote, *History*, 2.192 n. 1.

55 Grote, *History*, 2.194 n. 4.

56 Grote, *History*, 2.213 n. 2.

57 Grote, *History*, 2.197.

58 Grote, *History*, 2.202 n. 1.

59 Grote, *History*, 2.204 with n. 1.

60 Grote, *History*, 2.210 with n. 1.

discouraging the injured party to waive his right to personal revenge. But while Homeric society “in regard to this capital point in human progression” was on a level with the German tribes portrayed by Tacitus, the movement away from the right of private revenge in the historical period marked out the Greeks as more highly civilised.<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere, in his discussion of highway robbery, he distanced legendary from historical Greece by arguing that the nature of this habit was better paralleled by the behaviour of feudal barons of modern Europe during the middle ages rather than by the later period of historical Greece.<sup>62</sup>

We should note that the majority of parallels Grote deployed in these first volumes were conspicuously pre-modern or non-European: they might well be held to illustrate the rather foreign, or primitive, state of affairs of early Greece. Nevertheless, they create the expectation that early Greece will enjoy progress in terms of its social organisation. What was important about legendary Greece to Grote's overall scheme was that though “primitive,” its inhabitants possessed “a mental organisation unparalleled in any other people, and powers of invention and expression which prepared, as well as foreboded, the future eminence of the nation in all the various departments to which thought and language can be applied.”<sup>63</sup>

### 3 Analysing the Sources for “Historical Greece”

Grote's distinction between “legendary” and “historical” Greece was marked out by his position that whereas the former was attested only by myth, it was possible to write a factual account of the latter. While Grote's historical sections, which filled volumes 3 to 12 of his *History*, were grounded in attention to the ancient sources, his critical approach was frequently informed by comparative analysis. In his discussion of the sophists, challenging the tendency of historians to draw uncritically upon Plato's perspectives, he pointed out that it would be equally unjust to take a view of the present teachers and politicians of England and France “from that of Mr Owen or Fourier.”<sup>64</sup> Similarly, he warned against the methodological problem of viewing Kleon through the lens of Aristophanes.<sup>65</sup> Comparison demonstrated also his awareness of the processes behind the invention of tradition. In his discussion of the significance

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61 Grote, *History*, 2.212.

62 Grote, *History*, 2.226–7 n. 1.

63 Grote, *History*, 2.231.

64 Grote, *History*, 8.355.

65 Grote, *History*, 7.50; see below, 236.

of the third-century reforms for understanding archaic Sparta, he maintained that “the fancies, longings, and indirect suggestions of the present assumed the character of recollections out of the early, obscure, and extinct historical past,” offering a parallel to the “false colouring . . . attached by the political feeling of recent days to matters, of ancient history, such as the Saxon Witenagemote, the Great Charter, the rise and growth of the English House of Commons, or even the Poor Law of Elizabeth.”<sup>66</sup> Grote's parallels, therefore, contributed to his critical approach to the sources. At this point, I shall explore their role in a number of key areas in his account of historical Greece.

#### 4 Comparative Ethnography

Recent scholarship has demonstrated the ways in which nineteenth-century histories of Greece were very much involved with the ethnic construction of their classical subjects, developing them through Eurocentric lenses.<sup>67</sup> Part II of Grote's *History of Greece* begins with a description of Greek geography, topography and its peoples (chapters 1–5), drawing upon both ancient sources and accounts of modern travellers. Grote, in contrast to some travel-writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, only infrequently manufactured a connection between ancient and modern Greece.<sup>68</sup> In chapter 21, he likened

66 Grote, *History*, 3.168.

67 See Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, “The Fifth Oriental Monarchy and Hellenocentrism,” in *Achaemenid History II. The Greek Sources*, ed. Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amélie Kuhrt (Leiden: NINO, 1987), 117–31; Maria Brosius, “Two Views on Persian History in Eighteenth-Century England,” in Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Jan W. Drijvers, *Achaemenid History V. The Roots of the European Tradition* (Leiden: NINO, 1990), 79–89; Alexandra Lianeri, “The Persian Wars as the ‘Origin’ of Historiography: Ancient and Modern Orientalism in George Grote's *History of Greece*,” in *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars. Antiquity to the Third Millennium*, ed. Emma Bridges, Edith Hall and P.J. Rhodes (Oxford: University Press, 2007), 331–53; Phiroze Vasunia, “Alexander and Asia: Droysen and Grote,” in *Memory as History. The Legacy of Alexander in Asia*, ed. Himanshu Prabha Ray and Daniel T. Potts (New Delhi: Aryan Books, 2007), 89–102; Giovanna Ceserani, *Italy's Lost Greece* (Oxford: University Press, 2012), 193–250. For the contribution of history to the construction of a Western notion of history, see Alexandra Lianeri, “Unfounding times: The idea and ideal of ancient history in Western historical thought,” in *The Western Time of Ancient History. Historiographical Encounters with the Greek and Roman Pasts*, ed. Alexandra Lianeri (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 3–30.

68 For the view—widespread among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travellers—of the continuity between ancient and modern Greece, or the idea that antiquity was lodged in the modern Greek land, see Suzanne Said, “The mirage of Greek continuity: On the uses

the itinerant rhapsodes of modern Greece to those of early Greece.<sup>69</sup> But the lack of “carriage roads,” wagons or carts in Greece of the 1830s was said to be “a retrograde march to a point lower than the description of the Odyssey, where Telemachus and Peisistratus drive their chariot from Pylus to Sparta.”<sup>70</sup> He claimed that ancient Greece was more “healthy” in terms of irrigation and cultivation than its modern counterpart.<sup>71</sup> There were other uses of the comparison with contemporary Greece, to make points about the position of women, preference for sheeps’ milk or butter,<sup>72</sup> Laconian settlement patterns,<sup>73</sup> or to extol the virtues of ancient Greek seamen by reference to the “variety of ideas” and “quick intelligence” of their modern counterparts at Hydra.<sup>74</sup> In his geographical description of Arcadia, he mentions the “hardly accessible crags where the rivulet of Styx flowed down.” A footnote describes an episode Grote encountered in Fiedler’s *Reise durch Griechenland*:

He describes a scene amidst these rocks, in 1826, when the troops of Ibrahim Pasha were in the Morea, which realises the fearful pictures of war after the manner of the ancient Gauls or Thracians. A crowd of 5000 Greeks of every age and sex had found shelter in a grassy and bushy spot embosomed amidst these crags, few of them armed. They were pursued by 5000 Egyptians and Arabians: a very small resistance, in such ground, would have kept the troops at bay, but the poor men either could not or would not offer it. They were forced to surrender: the youngest and most energetic cast themselves headlong from the rocks and perished: 3000 prisoners were carried away captive, and sold for slaves at Corinth, Patras, and Modon: all those who were unfit for sale were massacred on the spot by the Egyptian troops.<sup>75</sup>

Grote’s description of the barbarity of Ibrahim’s troops evokes both revulsion at the atrocity and pity (a rare sentiment in Grote’s unsentimental approach to

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and abuses of analogy in some travel narratives from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century,” in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. William V. Harris (Oxford: University Press, 2005), 268–93 and Vlassopoulos, “The Construction of Antiquity,” 353–55; cf. Liddel, *Bishop Thirlwall*, 233–4.

69 Grote, *History*, 2.256.

70 Grote, *History*, 3.9 n. 1.

71 Grote, *History*, 3.19.

72 Grote, *History*, 3.18 n. 1.

73 Grote, *History*, 3.184 n. 2.

74 Grote, *History*, 5.168–9 with 169 n. 1.

75 Grote, *History*, 3.81 n. 1.

history, though paralleled in his comparative assessment of the evacuation of Attica before Salamis)<sup>76</sup> for the defenceless Greek victims, but another view of this parallel suggests that if there is any continuity at all between ancient and modern Greece, it is the undiminished cragginess of its landscape.

Contemporary Greece, therefore, offered little by way of a modern context for the historical ancient Greeks. Instead, Greeks of the period of archaic colonisation were presented as analogous, in their attitudes, to modern Western Europeans: Grote took the view that Phoenician settlements in Spain would have been "regarded by them [Greeks] somewhat in the same light as Mexico and Peru appeared to the Spaniards of the sixteenth century."<sup>77</sup> His view of Sicily and Italy represented the Greeks as a civilising force: the Sicilians were originally "of rude pastoral habits, dispersed either among petty hill-villages, or in caverns hewn out of the rock, like the primitive inhabitants of the Balearic islands and Sardinia; so that Sicily, like New Zealand in our century, was now for the first time approached by organised industry and tillage."<sup>78</sup> The difficulties that Greek settlers would have found in suppressing the natives of the "unconquerable forests and ravines of the Calabrian Apennines" were paralleled those that French military operations encountered in 1807 from "bandit villagers."<sup>79</sup> These episodes should be viewed in the light of his emphasis on mainland Greece, and his tendency, noted by Ceserani, to marginalise areas like Magna Graecia: Grote "set a new tone with his interest in the enterprise of Greek colonialism" and asserted the benefits offered by Greek colonisation.<sup>80</sup>

76 Grote evoked a "scene of tears and misery" for those who evacuated Attica during the Persian wars by reference to accounts of the evacuations of 1688 and 1821–2: Grote, *History*, 5.219; see below, p. 246.

77 Grote, *History*, 4.65.

78 Grote, *History*, 4.144–5, a view that was founded on the basis of the observations of contemporary accounts, which compared the cave dwellings of early Sicily, "the earliest effort of a primitive and pastoral people towards a town" to the "Troglydyte villages of Northern Africa" (4.145 n. 1).

79 Grote, *History*, 4.166–7. On comparisons between archaic Greek colonisation and the modern British version, see Edward A. Freeman, *Greater Greece and Greater Britain* (London: MacMillan, 1886) and Cromer, Earl of (Evelyn Baring), *Ancient and Modern Imperialism* (London: John Murray, 1910) with Sara Owen, "Archaeology, analogy and Archaic Greek colonization," in *Ancient Colonizations: analogy, similarity and difference*, ed. Henry Hurst and Sara Owen (London: Duckworth, 2005), 5–22 at 10–12; Gillian Shepherd, "The Advance of the Greek: Greece, Great Britain and Archaeological Empires," in *Ancient Colonizations: analogy, similarity and difference*, ed. Henry Hurst and Sara Owen (London: Duckworth, 2005), 23–44.

80 Ceserani, *Italy's Lost*, 214–19, esp. 218.

The Sicilian Greeks, though, remained an outpost of an anti-exemplary version of Greek civilisation: their leaders of the classical period were compared in their use of cunning to the *Prince* of Machiavelli, or, in their unpopularity, to the Duke of Orleans in 1792.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, the bilingualism of the Epirotes, compared with the bi- or tri-lingualism of their area in Grote's day, sets them out as natives of a colonial outpost, less relevant to Greek history than the main heartland of Hellenism.<sup>82</sup>

Comparative ethnography, therefore, was used to establish the Greeks as the colonialist civilisers of the peripheries of their world; it thereby contributed to a creation of an Aegean mainstream of Greek history. His understanding also of non-Greek peoples was developed by reference to comparison:

The Phoenician, the kinsman of the ancient Jew, exhibits the type of character belonging to the latter—with greater enterprise and ingenuity, and less of religious exclusiveness, yet still different from, and even antipathetic to, the character of the Greeks. In the Homeric poems, he appears somewhat like the Jew of the middle ages, a crafty trader turning to profit the violence and rapacity of others—bringing them ornaments, decorations, the finest and brightest products of the loom, gold, silver . . .—prepared at the same time for dishonest gain, in any manner which chance might throw in his way.<sup>83</sup>

Grote projects an image of the non-Hellenic nature of the Phoenicians by drawing upon a prejudiced perspective on mediaeval Jews, but also intimates a sense of continuity among Semitic peoples ancient and modern. At other points Grote illustrated continuity from antiquity to the modern era in terms of the nature of oriental peoples. For example, in his discussion of Kyaxares' war with Alyattes of Lydia, "in consequence of the refusal of the latter to give up a band of Scythian Nomads," he asserted that it was a common phenomenon for the movement of "Nomadic hordes" between different governments to cause conflict, pointing to the upheaval occasioned by the modern movement of peoples in central Asia.<sup>84</sup> Direct links between eastern peoples ancient and modern were offered as a way of assessing the racial categories of antiquity: the Scythians were the "earliest specimens of the Mongolian race" while "the

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81 Grote, *History*, 10.402; 11.114.

82 Grote, *History*, 4.187.1.

83 Grote, *History*, 2.218–19.

84 Grote, *History*, 4.27 with n. 1.



Egyptians were an African race.”<sup>85</sup> Aspects of his assessment of the ancient Persians coincide with Victorian stereotypes of the Orient as exotic, violent and different.<sup>86</sup> “So little in harmony with modern European manners” was Darius’ crucifixion (Hdt 3.159) of the subdued revolters at Babylon that Grote felt the need to draw upon a parallel from late-seventeenth century Russia “to strengthen the confidence of the reader in the accuracy of Herodotus.”<sup>87</sup> And at other points too he offers parallels as a way of identifying continuity or at least similarity between the ancient and modern east. Parallel examples of flaying were offered from ancient Persia and modern Turkey, as are mutilations, their mode of making war, and the tendency to hoard treasure.<sup>88</sup>

But, as usual, Grote demonstrates a sensitivity to the fits and non-fits illustrated by comparison: whereas the skill of archery was possessed by both ancient and modern Persians, the “rigid tenacity” of customs characteristic of the modern Orientals, he asserts, were owed to the “growth of Mahometanism,” and had little to do with the “old Zoroastrian Persians.”<sup>89</sup> Moreover, he noted that the ladies “in a Persian harem appear to have been less unapproachable and invisible than those in modern Turkey,” and that the cruelty of the Turks to the captured civilians and general at the time of the conquest of Cyprus in 1570 was not paralleled in Persian warfare.<sup>90</sup> It is clear that while Grote illustrates the nature of ancient Persians and other non-Greek groups by reference to modern Oriental parallels, his view of them is far from rigid.<sup>91</sup>

Political and racial concerns feature in Grote’s treatment of the Macedonians: its absolute monarchy was likened to that of Louis XIV, being associated with the notion of *L’État, c’est moi*, which, for Grote, meant that “the personality of the monarch is the determining element” in the structure of society.<sup>92</sup> Macedonia was characterised, then, as an absolute monarchy, and

85 Grote, *History*, 4.35; 4.56 n. 1.

86 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Peregrine, 1985), 35–110; Sancisi-Weerdenburg, “The Fifth”; cf. Brosius “Two Views” (on the eighteenth century); Thomas Harrison, *Writing Ancient Persia* (Bristol: Classical Press, 2011), 91–108, emphasising the range of depictions of the Achaemenid empire in nineteenth century.

87 Grote, *History*, 4.393 n. 3.

88 Grote, *History*, 5.13 n. 1; 5.335; 12.110 n. 1; 12.112 n. 2; 12.139.

89 Grote, *History*, 4.380 n. 2.

90 Grote, *History*, 4.413 n. 3; 5.13 n. 1.

91 Indeed, Lianeri has noted Grote’s reluctance to talk of the Persian empire as a despotism, and in so doing he avoided one of the defining characteristics of eighteenth-century European views of oriental monarchies: Lianeri, “The Persian Wars,” 349.

92 Grote, *History*, 10.43. See Herbert Rowen, “‘L’Etat c’est a moi’: Louis XIV and the State,” *French Historical Studies* 2 (1961): 83–98.

Philip's rule as "the self-will of a barbarian prince, not the *ingenium civile*, or sense of reciprocal obligation and right in society with others."<sup>93</sup> Alexander the Great is presented as a flawed character, making false claims about his revival of Hellenism, treating his Greek prisoners-of-war with the same presumption and indifference as Napoleon treated Germans in the service of Russians, possessing a military chest as poorly furnished as that of Napoleon on his Italian expedition of 1796, and, like a Persian king or Napoleon, unable to bear compromise.<sup>94</sup> Demetriou observes that Grote presented Alexander as a destroyer of Hellenism who humiliated the Athenians, and imitated oriental habits in terms of his religious impulses and cruelty.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, as Vasunia argues, Grote's account of Alexander's colonisation of Asia portrays him as a French despot rather than a British coloniser.<sup>96</sup> Such perspectives asserted Grote's view of the gulfs between modern liberal systems of government and those of the ancient Orient and Macedonia.

## 5 Kingship and Tyranny, Ancient and Modern

Grote employed comparative discussion to illuminate important distinctions between ancient Greek and modern systems of government, pointing to the absence, in antiquity, of any division between the administrative and judicial spheres,<sup>97</sup> and the tendency of ancient systems of government to invest sovereignty in a popular assembly compared with the narrowness of the executive in the modern world.<sup>98</sup>

Grote's interest in Greek political institutions emerges for the first time in his sections on legendary Greece (see above, 220–1). His description of the

93 Grote, *History*, II.469.

94 Grote, *History*, 12.3; 12.21; 12.192. For Grote on Alexander, see Kyriakos Demetriou, "Historians on Macedonian Imperialism and Alexander the Great," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 19 (2001): 23–60; Vasunia "Alexander"; Briant, this volume.

95 Demetriou, "Historians," 31–9 discussing Grote, *History* 12.133–9. On the omission of Macedonia from Grote's conception of Greece, see Andrew J. Bayliss, "Greek, but not Grecian? Macedonians in Enlightenment Histories," in *Reinventing History. The Enlightenment Origins of Ancient History*, ed. James Moore et al. (London: IHR, 2008), 219–46, at 229.

96 To make this point more strident, he drew an analogy, comparing Aristotle's advice to that offered by Burke to the British rulers of India, which offered a distinction between the governance of American colonies and the British in Asia: see Vasunia, "Alexander," 97.

97 Grote, *History*, 6.1–2 with n. 1.

98 Grote, *History*, 6.100.

Spartan constitution in chapter 6, however, proceeds without reference to historical parallels.<sup>99</sup> Only at one point, later in his history, in his description of the debate at Sparta before the Peloponnesian war, did he appear to find historical comparison a useful tool in explaining a Spartan institution: decision-making at the assembly was carried out by “cries analogous to the Aye or No of the English House of Commons . . . he [Sthenelaidas] therefore directed a division—like the Speaker of the English House of Commons when his decision in favour of Aye or No is questioned by any member.”<sup>100</sup> In this case, Grote appears to have deployed analogy to explain, approvingly, Sthenelaidas’ modification of the voting by acclamation, rather than trying to emphasise broader similarities between the modern British and ancient Spartan political systems.<sup>101</sup>

The first extensive political assertion made by Grote on the basis of comparative example concerned the end of kingship in archaic Greece. This had long been a concern of Grote. In his 1826 review of H.F. Clinton’s *Fasti Hellenici*, he attacked William Mitford’s *History of Greece*. Mitford had taken the view that the rise of “republican” government in Greece was analogous to revolutionary challenges to the system of monarchy in Europe. Grote, contrastingly, emphasised the incomparability of ancient Greek and modern European statehood and the different outcomes of political strife: while in Greece it led usually to the extinction of kingship, in modern Europe it resulted only in the expulsion of the ruling dynasty and its replacement with another.<sup>102</sup>

Grote maintained a strong view on differences in patterns of political change between the modern and ancient worlds: he saw the end of kingship in Greece as a demonstration of progress inspired by popular feeling and a challenge to the “feeling of divine right and personal reverence which originally gave authority to the king.” This development was made possible by the political independence of the city-state: whereas, on the other hand, in modern Europe, “the monarchical form presented itself as the only known means of union between the parts; the only visible and imposing symbol of

99 For Grote on Sparta, see Demetriou, *George Grote*, 119–122; Cartledge (with reference to Grote’s use of comparison), this volume. At other points, Grote made use of comparanda to explain Spartan phenomena and behaviour: *History*, 5.207 n. 1; 6.355 n. 3; 9.264. I am extremely grateful to Paul Cartledge for discussing with me the subject of Grote on Sparta.

100 Grote, *History*, 6.132.

101 The view of Spartans as “those hereditary Tories and Conservatives of Greece” appear to have been that of Mill, *Essays*, 303.

102 Grote, “Institutions,” 277, 282, 288; cf. Grote, *History* 3.236. See Demetriou, *George Grote*, 65.

a national identity."<sup>103</sup> Accordingly, republican government was rare among the larger nations of medieval and modern Europe, but existed in places, like Switzerland and Italy in the middle ages, where the city-state was the sovereign body.<sup>104</sup> Grote maintained that the Greeks' replacement of kingship with oligarchies (paralleled by the communes that emerged in mediaeval Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth century), and then in turn the oligarchies with tyrannies, was a "more simple and obvious change" than the development of constitutional forms of monarchy.<sup>105</sup>

Grote's view of the end of kingship was of course a reaction to Mitford's negative assessment of the movement towards popular sovereignty.<sup>106</sup> But it also criticised as a misconception Mitford's view that ancient Greek monarchies exhibited "mixed" and constitutional features,<sup>107</sup> and that the impact of their decline was mitigated by the preservation of "regal power" through virtuous and law-abiding tyranny.<sup>108</sup> Grote maintained that constitutional monarchy was a modern invention consequent of urbanisation.<sup>109</sup> In Greece, on the other hand, "the primitive sentiment entertained towards the heroic king died out, passing first into indifference, next—after experience of the despots—into determined apathy."<sup>110</sup> But this was hardly a neutral apathy: in fact, hatred of kings was a pre-eminent virtue, deriving from their suspicion of one-man rule and the "necessity of universal legal restraint";<sup>111</sup> their discontent with

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103 Grote, *History*, 3.232.

104 Grote, *History*, 3.233. For Grote's interest in Switzerland, see his *Seven Letters on the Recent Politics of Switzerland* (London: T. Newby, 1847) especially at iv and 93 for the possibility of instructive analogy between Greece and Switzerland. On the analogies between Greece and Switzerland, see Bain, *Minor Works*, 102–3 and Grote, *History*, 3.14 on the similarity of Switzerland and Greece in terms of physical "configuration."

105 Grote, *History*, 3.239. We might note also that his view of tyrannies (whom he labelled "despots") challenged Mitford's praise, taking the view that they were consequent of colliding forces, comparable to the factions among the Italian republics of the middle ages, and were little more than an intermediary stage in the development of Greek government: Mitford, *History*, 1.431–5; Grote, *History*, 3.313.

106 Mitford, *History*, 1.271–2; cf. 1.390–1. On the "strength and steadiness" of the government and administration of Greek government in the monarchical era, see Mitford, *History*, 1.128.

107 For Mitford's view of mixture and constitutionalism in the ancient forms of monarchy, see Mitford, *History*, 1.125, 277.

108 Mitford, *History*, 1.399, 432–3; Demetriou, *George Grote*, 86; Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 199.

109 Grote, *History*, 3.234–5; cf. 237.

110 Grote, *History*, 3.236.

111 Grote, *History*, 3.236.

kingship was to be contrasted with the “stationary and unimproving” mind of the Orientals, which was accepting of monarchy.<sup>112</sup>

By asserting the huge gulf between ancient and modern politics and patterns of political change, Grote's use of historical comparison allowed him to challenge Mitford's assessment of Greek politics. So far, we have seen Grote's emphasis on the differences between the ancient and modern worlds. It is perhaps significant, however, that his comparative analysis of Athens points in quite a different direction.

## 6 Early Athens

As the genre of the Greek historiography emerged in Anglophone circles in the second half of the eighteenth century,<sup>113</sup> the reputation of Athenian democracy came under sustained attack.<sup>114</sup> Grote set out to defend it. In sections 6, 7 and 8 of this chapter I shall explore Grote's advocacy of Athens and its democracy by looking at his account of early Athens, its political development, and aspects of its fifth-century history. By envisaging Athens as an enlightened democracy, Grote's *History of Greece* revolutionised the study of its history.<sup>115</sup> Comparative example played a significant role in his analysis of Athens, and was deployed far more frequently than in his analysis of any other community.

Grote considered early Athens to be a primitive community, in which the prominence in social organisation of *gentes* and phratries was analogous to

<sup>112</sup> Grote, *History*, 3.238.

<sup>113</sup> On this emergence, see Giovanna Ceserani, “Modern Histories of ancient Greece: Genealogies, contexts and eighteenth-century narrative historiography,” in *The Western Time of Ancient History. Historiographical Encounters with the Greek and Roman Pasts*, ed. Alexandra Lianeri (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 138–55; Kostas Vlassopoulos, “Acquiring (a)historicity: Greek history, temporalities and Eurocentrism in the Sattelzeit (1750–1850),” in *The Western Time of Ancient History. Historiographical Encounters with the Greek and Roman Pasts*, 156–78.

<sup>114</sup> Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 187–63; Demetriou, *George Grote*, 33–130; Roberts, *Athens on Trial*, 175–255. But as Macgregor Morris, “Navigating,” 278 notes, there were defenders of Athens in the eighteenth century.

<sup>115</sup> For the possibility that the pro-Athenian revolution extends back to the eighteenth century, see Oswyn Murray, “Introduction,” in Edward Bulwer Lytton, *Athens: Its Rise and Fall*, ed. Oswyn Murray (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 1–34; Macgregor Morris, “Navigating,” 255–66. For the way in which the presentation of an enlightened Athens formed part of a wider liberal project, see Nadia Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy. From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government* (Chicago: University Press, 2002).

the role of the Highland Clan, the Irish Sept, the Phis and Phara among the Albanians, the North American Indians and other communities at “an early stage of society.”<sup>116</sup> Notably, however, certain features of Grote’s early Athens portray it as comparatively modern, stable, self-regulating, and liberal in its nature. Addressing a long-standing concern of conservative writers, he maintained that there existed, in comparison to Rome and many kingdoms of modern Europe, comparative security of private property: the Solonian *seisachtheia* was never repeated.<sup>117</sup> The spirit of a banker shines through in his conclusion that “the democracy of Athens (and indeed the cities of Greece generally, both oligarchies and democracies) stands far above the senate of Rome, and far above the modern kingdoms of France and England until comparatively recent times, in respect of honest dealing with the coinage.”<sup>118</sup> Grote found evidence for a modern liberal mentality in the evidence for Solon’s laws: the granting of a power of a testamentary bequest to those without children was, for instance, a right unknown “throughout most rude stages of society” such as that of the ancient Germans and the Hindus.<sup>119</sup> Elsewhere, he offered a view of Athens as an economically liberal community, comparing the Athenian “respect for the sanctity of contracts”<sup>120</sup> and the lack of legal limitation on lending money at interest (which was instead regulated by an “equitable tone of opinion”)<sup>121</sup> with its regulation in old Jewish law, Roman law, and pre-Revolutionary France.<sup>122</sup> In Grote’s view, pervasive mutual trust and respect in Athens displaced the need for close regulation of creditors.

On the other hand, limits on such economic liberalism were identified by reference to comparative example: Solon’s restriction on exports was seen as broadly comparable to such legislation in the history of England, though “it tended to lessen the total quantity of produce raised upon the soil of Attica, and thus to keep the price of it from rising,—a purpose less objectionable (if we assume that the legislator is to interfere at all) than that of our late Corn

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116 Grote, *History*, 3.279–80. For assessment of the institutional details of archaic Athenian *gentes* by reference to comparative example in the shape of the Anglo-Saxon Tythings and Hundreds, see 3.273 n. 2.

117 Grote, *History*, 3.328.

118 Grote, *History*, 3.329; though at n. 2 Grote notes the comparable probity in the republic of Florence. Grote was also the author of a critical review of Boeckh’s views on Greek monetary systems: see Bain, *Minor Works*, 135–74.

119 Grote, *History*, 3.349 with Plutarch, *Life of Solon* 21.2.

120 Grote, *History*, 3.320.

121 Grote, *History*, 3.327; cf. 322.

122 Grote, *History*, 3.325, 368–72.

laws, which were destined to prevent the price of grain from falling."<sup>123</sup> Solon's legal restrictions on expenditure on weddings and funerals were justified by comparison to old Scandinavian laws and Sleeman's account of the "ruinous expenses" incurred in Hindu marriage ceremonies.<sup>124</sup>

The extent of, and limits on, early Athenian liberalism were, therefore, marked out by comparison both with primitive and contemporary societies: it is plausible to think that Grote aimed to elevate Athens to a comparatively favourable position compared to other societies at an early stage in their development.

## 7 The Development of Athenian Democracy

The foundation of Athenian liberalism was, for Grote, established in the archaic period, both in terms of institutions but also in the character that democracy fostered in the Athenian citizen-body, whereby both rights and duties were predetermined in the social order.<sup>125</sup> The revolutionary reforms of Kleisthenes transformed social relations along democratic lines: whereas in Rome, and the Italian and German cities of the middle ages, the patricians forged a separate political identity, Kleisthenes' changes had the effect of making the Athenian people into "one homogenous whole."<sup>126</sup>

Grote launched his extensive defence of Athenian liberty in the context of Kleisthenes' reforms; again, comparative analysis played a role. The freedom of the Athenians at this point did not bring their city to a state of anarchy, but rather constituted the "co-existence of freedom and self-imposed restraint—of obedience to authority with unmeasured censure of the persons exercising it."<sup>127</sup> He identified this as a similar liberty to that found among the English aristocracy since 1688 and in the democracy of the American United States. Yet, such liberty existed only imperfectly "at this day in the Swiss Cantons; while the many violences of the first French revolution illustrate, among other lessons, the fatal effects arising from its absence."<sup>128</sup> Grote's analysis, then, rather than amounting to a confusion of ancient and modern liberty, proposed a

<sup>123</sup> Grote, *History*, 3.348.

<sup>124</sup> Grote, *History*, 3.351–2 n. 3.

<sup>125</sup> See Peter Liddel, "Liberty and Obligations in George Grote's Athens," *Polis* 23 (2006): 139–61, at 145.

<sup>126</sup> Grote, *History*, 4.304. See also Demetriou, *George Grote*, 94; Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 218–9.

<sup>127</sup> Grote, *History*, 4.324–5.

<sup>128</sup> Grote, *History*, 4.325.



particular interpretation of liberty that was compatible with, indeed reliant upon, an internally-inspired sense of duty.<sup>129</sup> What is notable about Grote's view of Athenian democracy is that so much of it was dependent upon the democratic sentiment of the people: there emerged a "sovereign People, composed of free and equal citizens—or liberty and equality, to use those words which so profoundly moved the French nation half a century ago. It was this comprehensive political idea which acted with electric effect upon the Athenians, creating within them a host of sentiments, motives, sympathies and capacities, to which they had before been strangers."<sup>130</sup> Grote used this claim to challenge Edmund Burke's view about the importance of monarchy in ensuring political stability,<sup>131</sup> specifically his claim that "the mass of people are generally very indifferent about theories of government."<sup>132</sup> By the use of evocative comparison, therefore, Grote projected a vivid sense of the human sentiment that was at the background of Athenian democracy.

Comparative example was used also to ground assertions about the development of democracy. Democratic sentiment, Grote maintained, accelerated after the Persian wars as an Athenian "maritime multitude" became energised: this view was substantiated with another parallel to a modern struggle:

We see by the active political sentiment of the German people, after the great struggles of 1813 and 1814, how much an energetic and successful military effort of the people at large, blended with endurance of serious hardship, tends to stimulate the sense of political dignity and the demand for developed citizenship: and if this be the tendency even among a people habitually passive on such subjects, much more was it to be expected in the Athenian population, who had gone through a previous training of near thirty years under the democracy of Kleisthenes.<sup>133</sup>

It is interesting to note, in this passage (which draws upon the sentiment of Herodotus 5.78), that a military struggle can be seen to inspire two quite different communities in a politically analogous way.<sup>134</sup>

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129 Liddel, "Liberty"; Momigliano, *Studies*, 27, wrote that in his analysis of liberty Grote overlooked the "warning already given many years before by Benjamin Constant in his classical essay on the differences between ancient and modern liberty."

130 Grote, *History*, 4.345.

131 See Demetriou, *George Grote*, 41–2.

132 Grote, *History*, 4.345.

133 Grote, *History*, 5.366.

134 For Grote's view of the Persian wars as a stimulus for progress, see Lianeri, "The Persian Wars," 343–7.

Grote took the view that Athens built upon Kleisthenes' democratic foundations over the course of the fifth century.<sup>135</sup> The impact of the increase of trade and population of Athens in the middle of the fifth century gave rise to a new class of politicians, a development analogous to the eclipse by merchants and traders of the power of patrician families in the cities of mediaeval Europe.<sup>136</sup> By such parallels, the emergence of Athenian democracy appeared to follow patterns familiar also to contemporary European history. Yet more extensive was his deployment of comparison in his analysis of its nature in the fifth century.

## 8 Defending Athenian Democracy

Criticisms of Athenian democracy had been most sharply expressed in John Gillies' 1786 *History of Ancient Greece* and William Mitford's *History of Greece* (1784–1810).<sup>137</sup> As well as attacking the general tenor of Athenian democracy, historians had drawn upon particular institutions and events in order to underline the shortcomings of popular rule. Grote's early papers (his 1826 review of Clinton's *Fasti Hellenici* and his essay of 1821, published in 1896, "Of the Athenian Government") set out some of the sociological and institutional aspects on which he defended it.<sup>138</sup> Grote's defence of—and apology for—Athenian democracy was worked out more fully at points in his narrative history, and his arguments were often bolstered by reference to historical parallels. Mitford's attack on ostracism as a "mode of repressing the dangerous superiority which great abilities and superior character might acquire in a republic,"<sup>139</sup> for instance, was deemed incoherent given the acceptability of exile in monarchical governments:

In monarchical governments, a pretender to the throne, numbering a certain amount of supporters, is as a matter of course excluded from the country. The duke of Bordeaux cannot now reside in France—nor could

<sup>135</sup> On Grote's account of the development of democracy, see Demetriou, *George Grote*, 91–130.

<sup>136</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.265.

<sup>137</sup> On Gillies and Mitford, see Murray, "Introduction," 7–15; Roberts, *Athens*, 200–207; Demetriou, *George Grote*, 37–41; Ceserani, *Italy's Lost*, 141–4.

<sup>138</sup> Grote, "Institutions," 295–303; George Grote, "Of the Athenian Government," ed. John Buckler, Mortimer Chambers and John Vaio in *George Grote Reconsidered: A 200th Birthday Celebration with a First Edition of his Essay "Of the Athenian Government,"* ed. William M. Calder, III and Stephen Trzaskoma (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1996), 75–93.

<sup>139</sup> Mitford, *History*, 2.174; cf. Roberts, *Athens*, 243; Demetriou, *George Grote*, 97–100.

Napoleon after 1815—nor Charles Edward in England during the last century. No man treats this as any extravagant injustice, yet it is the parallel of the ostracism.<sup>140</sup>

In this case, the offending institution was not advocated wholesale, but Grote made a case for the hypocrisy of Mitford's strictures upon it.

The view of the Athenian people as a fickle mob prone to the misleading guidance of its demagogues was widespread in pre-Grote histories of Greece. Grote addressed this criticism; acknowledging that the Athenian *dêmos* "instead of being comparatively sedate and slow to move, like the English, is quick, impressible, and fiery, like Greeks or Italians," he maintained that the effects of this "constitutional malady" was mitigated through the frequency of public assemblies and the statesmanship of politicians like Demosthenes and Perikles.<sup>141</sup> Grote's *History* was famous for its defence of the Athenian demagogues.<sup>142</sup> Taking a view of them as commercially-based politicians paralleled by those of the cities of Mediaeval Europe, he defended Kleon against the charges of unduly virulent invective by comparing the early speeches of Lord Chatham against Sir Robert Walpole.<sup>143</sup> The tendency of historians to find fault with Kleon "on the basis of Aristophanic evidence" was challenged on the basis of the observation that "no man will take measure of a political Englishman from 'Punch', nor of a Frenchman from the 'Charivari'"; he was less defensive

140 Grote, *History*, 4.330.

141 Grote, *History*, 4.85, 86. A further example of Grote's defence of the Athenian democracy on a charge of rashness concerns the Athenian dismissal of Spartan ambassadors during the blockade at Sphacteria: this was held to be typical of the tendency of good fortune to lead to ambition; the experiences of Napoleon and the English aristocracy were compared and Grote cited a speech of Burke "on the temper of England during the American war": Grote, *History*, 6.340–1.

142 A view challenged by Shilleto, on whom see Christopher Stray, "Thucydides or Grote: classical disputes and disputed classics in nineteenth-century Cambridge," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 127 (1997): 363–71; Demetriou, *George Grote*, 100–107, 253–4; and Karen Whedbee, "Reclaiming rhetorical democracy: George Grote's defense of Cleon and the Athenian demagogues," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 34.4 (2003): 71–95. But Grote's defence was cited for the next century: see Moses Finley, "The Athenian Demagogues," *Past and Present* 21 (1962), 3–24 at 3; it received a mixed reception among French scholars: see Pierre Pontier, "Grote et la réception de Thucydide en France sous la II<sup>e</sup> République et le Second Empire," in *Ombres de Thucydide. La réception de l'historien depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'au début du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Valérie Fromentin, Sophie Gotteland and Pascal Payen (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2010), 235–46.

143 Grote, *History*, 6. 265, 268.

of Alkibiades, however, noting that his unprincipled nature resembled the satirical character of Jonathan Wild in Fieldings' attack on Robert Walpole, *Life and Death of Jonathan Wild, the Great*.<sup>144</sup>

Grote defended the Athenian *dêmos* against the charge of haste and fickleness by reference also to models of political thought. At chapter 36, he justified the decision to fine Miltiades for having deceived the people (Hdt. 6.134–6), a punishment that was imposed in spite of his leading the Athenians to victory at Marathon: "the hard fate of Miltiades has been imputed to the vices of the Athenians and their democracy—it has been cited in proof, partly of their fickleness, partly of their ingratitude."<sup>145</sup> Approvingly, Grote compared the Athenian decision with Machiavelli's contention that "the man who has rendered services ought to be recompensed for them, but he ought to be punished for subsequent crime just as if the previous services had not been rendered."<sup>146</sup> For Grote, then, the episode demonstrated its judicious treatment of a prominent individual.

Another controversial episode in Athenian history upon which Grote defended the Athenians was the witch-hunt in the aftermath of the mutilation of the Herms in 415 BC, an episode held by Mitford as an expression of one of "the worst evils of democratic frenzy."<sup>147</sup> Challenging the idea that the religious panic experienced by the Athenians was borne of her democracy,<sup>148</sup> Grote drew attention to "an analogous event of modern times from which we are not yet separated by a century," offering an account of the punishment of two aristocrats in 1766 in Beeville, France, on the charge of having damaged a wooden crucifix. The accused were condemned (on the basis of doubtful evidence) "to have their tongues cut out by the roots—to have their right hands cut off at the church gate—then to be tied to a post in the market place with an iron chain, and burnt by a slow fire," a sentence which was imposed not "by the people nor by any popular judicature, but by a limited court of professional judges sitting at Abbeville, and afterwards confirmed by the Parlement de Paris, the first tribunal of professional judges in France."<sup>149</sup> The Athenian treatment of the

144 Grote, *History*, 7.50; 7.102.

145 Grote, *History*, 5.79. This event was held by Mitford to demonstrate "how virulent, in calumny, faction was at Athens": Mitford, *History*, 2.105. For Grote's challenge of the view that the Athenian *dêmos* was fickle, see Demetriou, *George Grote*, 111–19.

146 Grote, *History*, 5.81 n. 1.

147 Mitford, *History*, 4.60.

148 On the influence of religion in the outcome of events, see also his analysis of the behaviour of the Athenians after Arginusae, influenced by the feelings inflamed by the festival of Apatouria: Grote, *History*, 8.183–4; Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 222–5; Liddel, "Liberty" 150.

149 Grote, *History*, 7.214 n. 3.

alleged perpetrators of the mutilation of Herms seemed mild in comparison. Furthermore, Grote offered further examples of the punishment of “analogous acts of sacrilege” in Christian and Catholic penal legislation before the time of the French Revolution: “The uniform tendency of Christian legislation, down to a recent period, left little room for reproaching the Athenians with excessive cruelty in their penal visitation of offences against the religious sentiment. On the contrary, the Athenians were distinguished for comparative mildness and tolerance.”<sup>150</sup>

The subject of the Athenian witch-hunt in the aftermath of the mutilation of the Herms to these events had already been the subject of comparative analysis. Connop Thirlwall’s *History of Greece* drew a parallel between these events and the “Popish Plot” of 1678.<sup>151</sup> Accordingly, Thirlwall emphasised that the Athenian panic was less absurd given the inseparability in antiquity of impiety and acts against the state. Grote took up the same parallel to similar effect, observing the many differences between the two “to the advantage of Athens,” and drawing the conclusion that “the state of mind into which the Athenians were driven after the cutting of the Hermae, was analogous to that of the English people during the circulation of the Popish Plot. The suffering, terror, and distraction, I apprehend to have been even greater at Athens: but while the cause of it was graver and more real, nevertheless, the active injustice which it produced was far less than in England.”<sup>152</sup>

Grote went so far as even to praise the Athenians for their conduct during this episode: in spite of the alarm which pervaded their community, they resisted the proposition of Peisander to put the *bouleutai* Mantitheus and Aphepsion to torture.<sup>153</sup> He favourably contrasted Athenian devotion to the law against the application of torture to citizens with the tendency, based on Roman law, to apply torture to witnesses and suspects which “pervaded nearly all the criminal jurisprudence of Europe until the last century.” He directed the reader to Manzoni’s *Storia della Colonna Infame*, as an example of “the degree to which public excitement and alarm can operate to poison and barbarise the course of justice in a Christian city, without a taint of democracy, and with professional lawyers and judges to guide the whole procedure secretly—as compared with a pagan city, ultra-democratical, where judicial procedure as well as decision was all oral, public, and multitudinous.”<sup>154</sup> As it

<sup>150</sup> Grote, *History*, 7.248.

<sup>151</sup> Liddel, *Bishop Thirlwall*, xxiii–iv.

<sup>152</sup> Grote, *History*, 7.250–1 n. 1.

<sup>153</sup> Grote, *History*, 7.237 with n. 2 with Andocides 1.43–4.

<sup>154</sup> Grote, *History*, 7.238 n. 2.

was elsewhere, Grote's aim was to demonstrate the error, in Demetriou's analysis, "to ascribe to democratic Athens crimes that are incident in human passion and prejudice and which are common to monarchies too."<sup>155</sup>

The Athenian treatment of the generals in the aftermath of the battle of Arginusae in 407/8 BC had been described by Mitford as "one of the most extraordinary, most disgraceful, and most fatal strokes of faction recorded in history."<sup>156</sup> While Grote acknowledged that the condemnation took place "without any of the recognised tutelary preliminaries for accused persons" and constituted "an act of violent injustice and illegality" contradictory to democratic institutions,<sup>157</sup> once again he asserted that the outcome did little to discredit democracy. Analogy was deployed to emphasize the gravity of the generals' crime: they themselves, their officers, and men, fell short of that behaviour which would have befitted "an earnest and courageous sense of duty" among modern English, French and American naval commanders. Accordingly, the verdict was "well founded": the people imposed a just punishment of the generals, but faltered only by failing to follow proper democratic procedure.<sup>158</sup>

The three episodes discussed above form elements of Grote's broader defence of the Athenian judicial system. In previous histories of Greece the powers of the lawcourts of Athens had come under considerable criticism; for Mitford, they had offered the setting for "factious intrigues."<sup>159</sup> Grote defended the Athenian courts at length in Chapter 46, entitled "Constitutional and Judicial Changes at Athens under Perikles," arguing that the Athenian procedure contributed substantially to the realisation of justice in Athens.

Drawing upon examples from the history of England, Rome, and the Italian city states of individuals and families powerful enough to abuse the passage of justice, Grote argued that the large number of jurors in Athens provided protection against the "reckless demeanour of rich men like Kritias, Alkibiades, and Meidias."<sup>160</sup> Grote maintained also that the post-1688 English jury-trial system and that of the Athenian dikastery shared a core value: the consultation of citizens to reach a fair verdict, "but in Athens this theory was worked out to its natural consequence; while English practice, in this respect as in so

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<sup>155</sup> Demetriou, *George Grote*, 117.

<sup>156</sup> Mitford, *History*, 4.342–3.

<sup>157</sup> Demetriou, *George Grote*, 115.

<sup>158</sup> Grote, *History*, 8.186; cf. 167–8.

<sup>159</sup> Mitford, *History*, 5.89.

<sup>160</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.27.

many others, is at variance with English theory.”<sup>161</sup> Grote’s view of the most important distinction, the presence of a professional judge in the English system, was equivocal: he pointed to examples of the abuse of authority by modern judges while acknowledging “his influence over the procedure as the authority on matters of law”; he observed also the effect of overruling the jury’s “feelings and judgement as man and citizens,—sometimes to the detriment, much oftener to the benefit (always excepting political trials), of substantial justice.”<sup>162</sup> As for their capacity for achieving just verdicts, he pronounced that “a delinquent, indicted for any state offence before the dikastery at Athens,—having only a private accuser to contend against, with equal power of speaking in his own defence, of summoning witnesses and of procuring friends to speak for him—would have better chance of a fair trial than he would now have anywhere except in England and the United States of America; and better than he would have had in England down to the eighteenth century.”<sup>163</sup> While the Athenian juries were particularly a strong protection against corruption and servility, they ran a stronger risk of potential error and mis-decision than the modern English jury-trial.<sup>164</sup>

Yet despite this defence of the benefits of the English system of jury-trial (described in Smith’s review as “the ablest defence of trial by jury in the English language”),<sup>165</sup> he maintained that its main virtues (those of ensuring “pure and even-handed justice,” of educating citizens generally, and of diffusing respect for the laws and constitution and a sense of patriotism) were yet more emphatically produced in the Athenian system.<sup>166</sup> Overall, it seems to be the case that Athenian juries, in terms of the dispensation of justice, were second-best to the modern English and American system, but in terms of inspiring patriotic feeling, and offering education and a guard against the influence of the rich and great, the Athenians were superior.

There were other areas in which Grote defended the morality that underlay Athenian conduct: their reaction to the onset of plague, for instance, did not lead the Athenians to cruel extremities or persecutions as they did at Carthage at times of pestilence or Milan in 1630 or Florence 1348.<sup>167</sup> This appears to have been a direct challenge to the view of Thirlwall, who had taken the view

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<sup>161</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.31.

<sup>162</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.32–33.

<sup>163</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.37.

<sup>164</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.38.

<sup>165</sup> Smith, “Grote’s,” 70.

<sup>166</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.34.

<sup>167</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.193.



that the plague, by reducing the moral influence of religious belief, indicated the absence of a "spirit of benevolence" among the Athenians, and that the Athenians were overcome by an "all-engrossing selfishness": the Bishop of St David's maintained that this provided "a striking contrast to the sublime charity, which has made the plagues of Milan and of Marseilles bright spots in the history of religion and humanity."<sup>168</sup>

As we have already seen in his treatment of the episodes of the Herms and Mysteries and the plague, a theme of Grote's *History* was the humanity of the Athenian democracy and the comparative mildness of punishment current at Athens.<sup>169</sup> Comparing the predilection of the Persians for mutilation of criminals and prisoners, he maintained that "even the cup of hemlock given to Sokrates, for instance, granted him little pain, and little indignity."<sup>170</sup> And while he acknowledged the greater humanity of "public sentiment" in England in his own day, the comparisons with France in the eighteenth century were favourable: "an Athenian public could not have borne the sight of a citizen publicly hanged or beheaded in the market-place. Much less could they have borne the sight of the prolonged tortures inflicted on Damians at Paris in 1757 (a fair parallel to the Persian *skapheusis* described in Plutarch *Artaxerxes* 16), in the presence of an immense crowd of spectators, when every window commanding a view of the Place de Grève was let at a high price, and filled by the best company in Paris."<sup>171</sup>

The mildness of democratic Athenians, was not, according to Grote, universal among the Greeks: his paragraphs on the Corcyrean stasis leads him to compare it with the violence of France in 1789 and 1799 and reminds him of the lesser humanity and greater level of cruelties in war of the eras before the seventeenth century.<sup>172</sup> Indeed, mildness of punishment was specific to the democratic administration of Athens: the atrocities carried out under the regime of the 400 were likened to those of a "Vehmic tribunal,"<sup>173</sup> a system of Westphalia of the later medieval times.

Famously too, Grote defended the Athenian empire.<sup>174</sup> Its nature, for Grote was a corollary of the democratic system of Athens, but he drew upon

<sup>168</sup> Liddel, *Bishop Thirlwall*, xxv.

<sup>169</sup> Liddel, "Liberty," 151–3.

<sup>170</sup> Grote, *History*, 9.97 n. 1.

<sup>171</sup> Grote, *History*, 9.97 n. 1.

<sup>172</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.296–7.

<sup>173</sup> Grote, *History*, 8.28.

<sup>174</sup> Demetriou, *George Grote*, 107–111; Thomas Harrison, "Through British Eyes: The Athenian Empire and Modern Historiography," in *Classics and Colonialism*, ed. Barbara Goff

comparison with the British empire in order to convey a vivid view of its establishment and its nature. The transformation of the Delian Confederacy into an empire was facilitated by the readiness of Athens' allies to transfer their military forces to Athens "by their own act, just as that of so many of the native princes in India has been made over to the English."<sup>175</sup> The view that this supported, that Athens "without any predetermined plan passed from a chief into a despot" was one that pre-empted the view of the British Empire enunciated in later works, that the English had acquired it "in a fit of absence of mind."<sup>176</sup> In one section of chapter 47, he set out in depth the view that the Athenian empire might be viewed as "essentially a government of dependencies," an imperial state exercising authority over subordinate governments, citing *Government of Dependencies: An Essay* of the distinguished classicist and MP for Hereford, G.C. Lewis. This parallel demonstrated, Grote claimed, that the maintenance of beneficial relations between supreme and subordinate governments is a perennial problem of empire. He cited the case brought at the Court of Common Pleas in 1773, by a native of Minorca, against the governor of the island, as an illustration of both the "illiberal and humiliating vein of sentiment which is apt to arise in citizens of the supreme government towards those of the subordinate" and "the protection which the English Jury Trial, nevertheless, afforded to the citizens of the dependency against oppression by English officers." This comparandum served a two-fold purpose: not only did it defend the habits of the English imperialism and the jury-trial system,<sup>177</sup> but it also demonstrated that the Athenian democrats were not particularly cruel or oppressive, and made more plausible the view that Athenian juries would have had sympathy for their imperial subjects.<sup>178</sup>

On the other hand, it is hardly surprising that Spartan attempts to form imperial confederations were described through the lens of less favourable comparanda: their offers at the end of the Peloponnesian War of free constitutions were compared to the empty promises of the sovereigns of Europe in 1813,

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(London: Duckworth, 2005), 25–37; Peter Liddel, "European Colonialist Perspectives on Athenian Power: Before and After the Epigraphic Explosion," in *Interpreting the Athenian Empire*, edd. John Ma, Nikolaos Papazarkadas, and Robert Parker (London: Duckworth, 2009), 13–42.

<sup>175</sup> Grote, *History*, 5.388.

<sup>176</sup> John Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, ed. John Gross (Chicago: University Press, 1971), 8; Harrison, "Through British Eyes," 30; Liddel, "European," 18.

<sup>177</sup> He shared a view of the benevolence of British rule with other writers, such as Mill and Sleeman: Vasunia, "Alexander," 94.

<sup>178</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.92–3 n. 1.

who were reliant upon the resistance of the people in their attempts to resist the onset of Napoleon. Accordingly, Grote's negative analysis of Spartan imperialism set into deeper relief the liberal nature of its Athenian counterpart.<sup>179</sup>

Grote's account of fourth-century Greek history, including that of Athens, contains relatively few parallels. This may have been owing to the relatively compact nature of his account of the period after the Peace of Nikias.<sup>180</sup> He may well also have perceived it, in terms of its achievements, to be significantly less worthy of comparison than the fifth-century world: he suggested elsewhere that the behaviour of the people in fourth-century Athens was at odds with the virtue of their fifth-century counterparts.<sup>181</sup> Only occasionally was this decline expressed through comparative analysis: the proposal to draw military funds from the theoric fund was compared with the hypothetical parallel "as if the proprietors in France or Belgium claimed to exempt themselves from direct taxation for the cost of a war, by first taking either all or half the annual sum voted out of the budget for the maintenance of religion," a comparison that Grote maintained "makes against the Athenian proprietors, in degree."<sup>182</sup>

We should observe that Grote used parallels to explain fifth-century Athenian political history with more frequency than for any other community. There are exceptions: his assertion that the unification of Messenia was caused by rivalry between the Thebans and Spartans was founded upon the view that the impetus for the Federal Constitution of the USA was provided by the rivalry between New York and Philadelphia.<sup>183</sup> But Grote in this case deployed comparative analysis in a very different way, aiming to suggest a tendency of historical development rather than attempting to advocate Messenian unification as exemplary. The overriding sense is that the only ancient Greek community valid of comparison with the modern world—and which offers the potential of teaching something to the ancient world—is that of democratic Athens.

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179 Grote, *History*, 9.264 and 269.

180 In the preface of the 1849 edition, Grote warned his readers that the era after Nikias would be covered with more brevity: Grote, *History*, l.xxiv.

181 On Grote's view of fourth-century decline, Lawrence Tritle, "The Athens of George Grote: Historiography and Philosophic Radicalism," in *Text and Tradition. Studies in Greek History and Historiography in honor of Mortimer Chambers*, ed. Ronald Mellor and Lawrence Tritle (Claremont: Regina, 1999), 367–78; Roberts, *Athens*, 246, Demetriou, Liddel, "Liberty," 157–9.

182 Grote, *History*, 11.320 n. 2.

183 Grote, *History*, 10.193–4 n. 2.

## 9 Religion

In early work, unpublished until the late twentieth century, Grote expressed reservations on the social influence of religion.<sup>184</sup> The subject received occasional comparative treatment in his *History*, most extensively in his chapters on early Greek legend, where, as we have seen,<sup>185</sup> he endorsed Grimm's view that religious belief was a vital element in the emergence of legend. On one hand, Grote stated a strong view of the difference between ancient Greek religious belief and contemporary monotheism: "Christian and the Mahomedan religions" began during a "historical age," were propagated from a common centre, and were erected "upon the ruins of a different pre-existing faith"; on the other hand, "Greek Paganism . . . took rise in an age of imagination and feeling," and lacked, at its early stages, the assistance of historical conscience: it was, therefore, "a primordial faith" which emerged as a product of "many separate tribes and localities."<sup>186</sup> The nature of early Greek religious belief was comprehensible through the "state of mind now actually prevalent among the native population of Hindostan," a view which coincided with one taken in Mill's review of 1846.<sup>187</sup> In a discussion of the nature of Greek gods and their tendency to consist of "quasi-human or ultra-human personages," Grote paralleled the Greek tendency both to consider geographical features as supernatural beings and to talk of physical features as ancestors with native beliefs in New Zealand and Hindu religion as an "illustration of feeling."<sup>188</sup>

But how far was this, to Grote's mind, primitive mentality a characteristic also of the historical era?<sup>189</sup> It is notable that even in the relatively modern scenario of classical Athens, there was a place for parallels which anchored the Athenians to primitive societies: the washing and cleansing of the statue of Athena by the Praxiergidai was illustrated by reference to the "existing sentiment of the Hindoo religion," whereby the image of the God Vishnu was washed with water from the Ganges.<sup>190</sup> On occasion Grote compared historical Greek religion with Christianity, offering a parallel between the importance of

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184 Note Grote's "Essay on Magick," viewed by Vaio, "Seventy Years" as an indirect attack on religion in general.

185 See above, 216–22.

186 Grote, *History*, 1.46–7.

187 Grote, *History*, 1.xxiii–xxiv; Mill, *Essays*, 290.

188 Grote, *History*, 2.3 n. 2.

189 As suggests Vasunia, "Alexander," 94.

190 Grote, *History*, 8.128 n. 2. On the impact of religion in the affair concerning the execution of the generals, see Grote, *History*, 8.172 with Demetriou, *George Grote*, 127.

"things exhibited" in ancient religion and the "memorable history of the Holy tunic at Treves in 1845,"<sup>191</sup> and measuring Nikias' obsession with seers against their influence at the court of Louis XIV "and other Catholic princes."<sup>192</sup> A gap, meanwhile, between ancient and modern belief-systems was identified later in his history: Grote maintained that one respect in which Greek religion was very different from the modern was that it "included within itself and its manifestations nearly the whole range of social pleasures"; it followed, accordingly, that the appropriation of the theoric fund (originally established to provide a subsidy for poor citizens to obtain theatre seats) for military purposes, given that it was essentially a "Church Fund," was controversial.<sup>193</sup>

At another point he sought to re-cast the significance of religion in a secular sense: in his discussion of Herodotus' account of the circulation of a divinely-inspired *pheme* at the battle of Mykale (Hdt. 9.100), he offered a parallel with the feeling of inspiration and common cause that swept through the people at the capture of the Bastille on the 14th of July, 1789.<sup>194</sup> What we note, therefore, is that while Grote set out a distinction between ancient and modern religion in his early chapters, his tendency to draw on an analogy pulls in the opposite direction and leads him to portray overlaps between the impact of religious belief in the ancient and modern worlds.

## 10 Military Parallels

In spite of its philosophical approach to the ancient past,<sup>195</sup> swathes of Grote's *History*, in particular its second half, were dedicated to accounts of military history. Parallels were deployed widely in his accounts of the Persian wars,<sup>196</sup> the Peloponnesian War, and the wars of the fourth century BC. On occasion, analogy was central to his analysis, whether of an established controversy (he suggests that it was not impossible that Theopompus was killed in the Messenian war, given that Nelson was slain while contributing to the destruction of the French fleet)<sup>197</sup> or as part of an argument to support his

191 Grote, *History*, 5.307–8.

192 Grote, *History*, 6.303.

193 Grote, *History*, 11.317.

194 Grote, *History*, 5.295 n. 2.

195 For the view of the *History* as a philosophical history, see John Vaio, "George Grote," 63–68; also see Grote, "Institutions," 278–81, 331.

196 For Grote on the Persian Wars, see Lianeri, "The Persian Wars."

197 Grote, *History*, 3.188–9 n. 2.

own calculations: in one long discussion, the human capacity of a trireme was paralleled with that of Venetian galleys of the thirteenth century.<sup>198</sup>

At another point he drew upon an analogy to make a historiographical point: in his discussion of the numbers of Persian invaders that came to Greece with Xerxes, he observed that, with reference to the war between the Russians and the Turks in 1770, "it seems not to be considered necessary for a Turkish minister to know the number of an assembled Turkish army."<sup>199</sup> If a modern Oriental administration did not know the magnitude of its forces, how likely is it that its ancient counterpart would have done so?

Military parallels were deployed for rhetorical reasons. The evacuation of Athens before the battle of Salamis was paralleled to that of mainland Greece in 1688, 1821 and 1822: in this case his emphasis was to make the miseries, dangers, and consequent desolation of the act of evacuation more vivid.<sup>200</sup> The scale of Athens' defeat at Syracuse, meanwhile, was held to be akin to that of Napoleon's Russian campaign.<sup>201</sup> Moreover, he aimed to provide a vivid portrayal of bravery when he offered the parallel of the battle of Sempach (June 1386) "in which 1400 half-armed Swiss overcame a large body of fully-armed Austrians" to the "gallant rush made by these badly-armed Persians" at Plataia.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, he "illustrates" the heroism of the Plataian resistance to the Thebans by reference to an account of both the Paris insurrection in June 1848 and also the "heroic defence of Saragossa against the French in the Peninsular war."<sup>203</sup>

At other times there is a moral, almost apologetic, intention to the use of comparison: discussing the habit of Greeks to slaughter all prisoners-of-war, he noted that this was a modern tendency too, citing an example from a campaign of the German and Hungarian army in 1603 against the Turks.<sup>204</sup> The Spartan treatment of Aristodemus, survivor of Thermopylai, was made to look less barbaric by its parallel to the Swiss treatment of survivors of the August 1444 battle of St Jacob on the Birs, near Basle.<sup>205</sup> The unpredictability of Greek mercenaries at the end of the fifth century BC was illustrated by reference to "those

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198 Grote, *History*, 6.226–7 n. 1.

199 Grote, *History*, 5.157 n. 1.

200 Grote, *History*, 5.219 n. 1.

201 Grote, *History*, 4.389–90 n. 2.

202 Grote, *History*, 5.280–1 n. 4.

203 Grote, *History*, 6.152 n. 1.

204 Grote, *History*, 6.98 n. 2.

205 Grote, *History*, 5.207 n. 1.

mercenary armies which marched about in Italy during the fourteenth century, under the generals called Condottieri, taking service with one city, sometimes with another."<sup>206</sup> The surrender of the Spartans at Sphacteria was excused by his speculation that "the best troops in modern times would neither incur reproach nor occasion surprise, by surrendering" in similar circumstances.<sup>207</sup>

At other times, parallels were used to explain details of military organisation: the nature of the Athenian *epibatai*, for instance, was enlightened by their correspondence in terms of their function to English marines, "who were trained to the different modes of sea-fighting and also made useful in some of those manoeuvres of a ship where a great many hands were required."<sup>208</sup> The Macedonians' *sarissa* was paralleled with the Cossack pike and their deployment of light-armed troops for advanced posts or scouting the country was likened to that of the Cossacks.<sup>209</sup> He suggested that there had been a Swiss and German "reproduction of the Macedonian phalanx";<sup>210</sup> modern military tactics are paralleled to modern ones: the damming up of the River Ocker in 1627, during the siege of Wolfenbuettel during the Thirty Years' War, was presented as a parallel to Agesipolis' siege of Mantinea by the damming of the river Ophis.<sup>211</sup> We can note finally that the use of parallels in explaining military matters is the source of one of the few jokes of Grote's *History*: "The name Iphikratides, given to these new-fashioned leggings or boots, proves to us that Wellington and Blucher are not the first eminent generals who have lent an honourable denomination to boots and shoes."<sup>212</sup>

What is striking about Grote's deployment of military parallels, therefore, is his understanding that the important aspects of behaviour of human groups in military situations was, on the whole, constant between the ancient and modern worlds.

206 Grote, *History*, 9.199. On Grote's view impact of mercenary forces and the wider implications for notions of civic virtue, see Tritle, "The Athens," 373–6.

207 Grote, *History*, 6.355.

208 Grote, *History*, 6.312 n. 1.

209 Grote, *History*, 12.8; 12.12.

210 Grote, *History*, 12.48.

211 Grote, *History*, 10.32 n. 3.

212 Grote, *History*, 9.393–4 n. 1. The humour was noted by Freeman: Edward A. Freeman "Grote's History of Greece," *North British Review* 25 (1856): 141–72, at 143–4.



## 11 Conclusion

Reference to comparative example was widely deployed in Grote's early publications and much of his *History*, particularly the sections on early Greece and fifth-century Athens. The span of Grote's comparanda is tremendous, covering five continents and two thousand years; they consist of reference to scholarly studies of other cultures and their traditions, allusions to historical (and contemporary) episodes, mediaeval and modern social and political institutions; they go beyond straightforward historical reality, assessing the performance of Greek political arrangements in the light of political theory,<sup>213</sup> fiction, and hypothetical scenarios.

The comparative approach leads the historian to ask a number of searching questions: what are the appropriate comparanda? What difficulties does their application entail? Do they emphasise similarity or difference? What is their relationship to moralistic analyses of history? The variety of Grote's comparanda meant that his responses were multifaceted. Their use surpasses the motivations that he explicitly set out in his written work.<sup>214</sup> They were central to his development of a critical approach to history: they challenged previous interpretations; they made points about both differences and overlaps between ancient and modern politics, religion and military affairs. They were used to explain, expand and illustrate ancient phenomena;<sup>215</sup> to identify tendencies of historical development; they were used in the evaluation of Greek legislation and tendencies; comparison contributed also to the rhetorical impact of narrative descriptions. They were essential to Grote's interpretation: they demonstrated, for instance, his view of *mythopoiesis*, the impossibility of extracting historical data from legend, and the problems in using literary sources in the writing of political history.

We can draw several substantive points from this exploration of comparative examples: the breadth of Grote's frame of reference suggests that his comparanda were deliberately chosen as a way of communicating the nature of Greek communities at particular points in history: he selected examples from "primitive" (today we might call them pre-literate or pre-industrial) societies to illustrate the "state of society and manners" of early Greece or the belief-systems of Greek antiquity, to illustrate the fits and non-fits between ancient

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213 There is no room in this chapter to discuss his comparison of Socratic elenchus with the "inductive method" of Bacon: see Grote, *History*, 9.46.

214 See above, 214–16.

215 At *History*, 3.295 n. 2: Grote looks for parallels of the Athenian practice of trying inanimate objects that have caused death.

and later “oriental” civilisations, and to present the Greeks of the Aegean area as the force of progress and civilisation. In political terms, they highlight gaps between the ancient and modern worlds: the absence of the division of powers; they challenge Mitford’s view of the comparability of ancient Greek and modern European monarchy; on the other hand, they depict his view of the liberal—and in some senses modern—nature, legislation, and behaviour of the democratic Athenians both in their lawcourts and in their capacity as imperial rulers. Despite the fact that there are discontinuities in the ancient Greek and modern political systems, the behaviour of the fifth-century Athenians at times (when not diverted by religious sentiment) is often made to look equivalent to that of the modern British. Analogy, therefore, is not a neutral tool, but contributes greatly to the interpretation of Greek history as a modernising, European, colonising, narrative. Accordingly, taking us beyond his stated intentions, Grote’s deployment of comparanda is suggestive of his Eurocentric metanarrative.

Moreover, the use of analogy also suggests Grote’s ambitions to address wider historical issues: this was the “mutual illustration” to which Alexander Bain referred. Grote’s *History* asserted (or re-asserted) points about the use of legend in the writing of the history of England or on the basis of the lives of the Christian saints (which drew criticism from those worried about its impact upon Biblical criticism),<sup>216</sup> to communicate a view of the unsurpassed judiciousness of the English trial-by jury, and, by illustrating, at various points, the decadence and cruelties undertaken under the old French monarchy, to defend the sweeping away, in revolutionary circumstances, of the *ancien régime*.

Grote’s use of parallel is built upon the notion that human nature is broadly comparable across the ages and that very different human communities form institutions and react to particular situations in ways which are paralleled by other historically distant communities. But by offering pre-modern, mediaeval and sometimes non-European parallels in his historical account of early Greece and other (especially non-Athenian) parts of his history, he was able to maintain a gulf between the early-Greek/non-Athenian and “modern” European worlds. Yet Grote was aware of the importance of historical contingency in determining human behaviour: distinctively, classical Athens (as well as some aspects of military history) afforded comparison with the modern world. Accordingly, by drawing upon “modern” or contemporary Western (and in particular British and even American) comparisons in his analysis of Athenian history, Grote was able to bridge the gulf between the ancient and modern where it suited him, enabling the Athenian city-state to serve as

<sup>216</sup> Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 144–50.

an instructive example for the reader. And, given his view that “none of the governments of modern times, democratical, aristocratical or monarchical, presents anything like the picture of generous tolerance towards social dissent, and spontaneity of individual taste,”<sup>217</sup> this appears central to Grote’s mission, and one upon which John Stuart Mill built: to demonstrate the trans-historical applicability of the success and liberality of Athenian democracy and to portray them as the “teachers of posterity” (see above, p. 215).<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Grote, *History*, 6.182.

<sup>218</sup> Generally, on this aim, see Eugenio F. Biagini, “Liberalism and direct democracy: John Stuart Mill and the model of Ancient Athens,” in *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identity in the British Isles*, ed. Eugenio F. Biagini (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 21–44.

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## Grote's Sparta/Sparta's Grote

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Let me begin with a confession: George Grote is one of my history heroes, up there in the pantheon alongside Herodotus, Thucydides, Guicciardini, Gibbon, Macaulay—and Moses (Finley). I am not therefore the most objective of all commentators on his work, if indeed objectivity is possible—or desirable—in historiography. I have delivered elsewhere—and shall not unduly repeat here—a summary assessment of Grote's status and stature as a historian, with special reference to a condensed and edited selection from his originally 12-volume *History of Greece* (1846–1856) made by J.M. Mitchell and M.O.B. Caspari (later Max Cary) and published by Routledge in 1907.<sup>1</sup> The selection was judicious, and judiciously edited and annotated; and it was judicious not least in being focused fixedly on Grote's history of Athens (from the time of Solon to 403 BC) rather than of Greece. For from an early age Grote (born in the year Gibbon died, 1794) was an admirer and adherent not just of ancient Athens but more particularly and specifically of the ancient Athenian democracy of the fifth and fourth centuries BC; and in making a case for that hitherto much reviled polity, he both reoriented the trajectory of ancient history-writing and set the agenda for what is taken to be the 'core' of ancient Greek history ever since, that is to say, a history of democracy with Athens front and centre.<sup>2</sup>

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\* It was an honour to be invited to contribute to this volume by Professor Demetriou, an acknowledged expert on all things Grotean, especially his reception: Kyriakos Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy: A Study in Classical Reception* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1999); ed. *Classics in the Nineteenth Century: Responses to George Grote*, 4 vols (London: Thoemmes, 2003). I have also benefited greatly from private correspondence with Peter Liddel.

- 1 "Introduction" to Mitchell & Caspari, 2001 (1907): ix–xx; The original John Murray edition of *A History of Greece* (12 vols, London, 1846–1856) has been handsomely reprinted in facsimile by the Cambridge University Press in its "Cambridge Library Series" (Cambridge, 2010). There was also a 10-volume edition, published in 1888, seventeen years after Grote's death. But I cite *A History of Greece* by the pagination of the 12-volume 1906 "Everyman's Library" edition (London: J.M. Dent & Co.; N.Y.: E.P. Dutton & Co.).
- 2 I say this despite Oswyn Murray's attempt to accord the priority to E. Bulwer Lytton, whose 1837 volume not only was inchoate but languished in obscurity thereafter. Oswyn Murray, ed. *Edward Bulwer Lytton, Athens: Its Rise and Fall* (originally 1837, repr. London & N.Y.:

Young men are often radical, and as an elected Member (briefly) of the British Parliament Grote belonged to a loose grouping dubbed retrospectively the “philosophic radicals.”<sup>3</sup> But in a much longer, now almost two centuries-long perspective it is Grote’s historiography rather than his practical politics that can be seen to have been the more oddly radical, and it is that which has had by far the more lasting effect.<sup>4</sup> By now it is—or should be—a commonplace that almost all political thinkers in the Western tradition whose opinions are on record—from Greek antiquity down to the very end of the 18th century and indeed often well beyond—simply abhorred ancient Athenian democracy, not only as a practical political option but also as a theoretical ideal. Jennifer Tolbert Roberts has well written of the “anti-democratic tradition in Western thought.”<sup>5</sup> Athenian *demokratia* for them was—as the term could very well be translated, with conscious anachronism—the dictatorship of the proletariat; in another word, mobocracy, or the tyranny of the stupid, ignorant and unenlightened mass of poor and humble Athenian citizens over their betters—the intelligent, upper-class and above all propertied or moneyed elite few. The word ‘democracy’ had started its hesitant rise in the scale of esteem towards the end of the eighteenth century, as a very muted part of the background noise of the American and French Revolutions; optimists could even trace the origins of what only later became explicitly labelled the ‘democratic’ movement as far back as the Putney (or Leveller) Debates of the late 1640s within Cromwell’s New Model Army.<sup>6</sup> But it was not until about the middle of the nineteenth century that ‘democracy’ at last became ‘okay’—precisely because by then it had been emptied of its original radical or revolutionary content and had come to stand for representative, parliamentary democracy, as far removed as possible from the direct *kratos* of the masses; in the U.K. it

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Routledge, 2004); rev. by N. Urbinati *BMCR* 2005.04.02. Bulwer Lytton is known today, not for his historical work on ancient Athens, but for being the author of the immortal exordium “It was a dark and stormy night . . .,” and of the novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834).

- 3 William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice, 1817–1841* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). Grote is the ninth and last of Thomas’s “studies.” Grote is the central figure of F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1981).
- 4 Demetriou, *George Grote*, 1999; Demetriou, ed. *Classics in the Nineteenth Century* (4 volumes, mostly drawn from Victorian journals; the debates over *History of Greece* are collected in vols 1 and 2).
- 5 J.T. Roberts, *Athens on Trial: the Anti-Democratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
- 6 M. Mendle, ed. *The Putney Debates of 1647. The Army, the Levellers and the English State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

was even possible to combine 'democracy' so understood with monarchy, if only of an allegedly 'constitutional' variety.

Those relatively very few early-modern thinkers such as Voltaire who had a good word to say for ancient Athens usually said it on behalf, not of its political system of self-governance, but of its commercial spirit, its encouragement of luxury. In that eighteenth-century battle of the bookmen the—far more often preferred—antithesis of luxurious Athens was austere, virtuous, "Lycurgan" Sparta; even Rousseau the incipient proto-democrat belonged firmly to that party.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, that was the case all the way back to the very beginning of the "anti-democratic tradition in Western thought," in the works of Critias and his kinsman Plato produced in—and against—democratic Athens. Put the other way round, the story that dominated this European and Euro-American tradition was a Spartan one.<sup>8</sup> So, when the intellectually serious modern historiography of ancient Greece began in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century,<sup>9</sup> it was not at all surprising that one of its most influential early exponents, William Mitford, adopted the standard, conservative, pro-Spartan line. What was surprising, rather, were the degree and strength of resistance that Mitford encountered, at first from Connop Thirlwall,<sup>10</sup> and then, above all and triumphantly so, from George Grote, ex-banker, ex-MP, and singleminded researcher and historian of "Grecian" history from deepest and darkest 'legendary' times to what Grote took to be the end of independent Greek history, that is with "the extinction of Grecian freedom and self-activity" and "the decay of productive genius" (12.387) in the generation of the "non-Hellenic" Alexander the (not so) Great (12.388).<sup>11</sup>

7 "The Socratics' Sparta and Rousseau's" in S. Hodkinson & A. Powell (eds.), *Sparta: New Perspectives* (London & Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 1999), 311–37.

8 E.D. Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969; repr. 1991).

9 G. Ceserani, "Modern histories of ancient Greece: Genealogies, contexts and eighteenth-century narrative historiography," in A. Lianeri, ed. *The Western Time of Ancient History. Historiographical encounters with the Greek and Roman Pasts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 138–56.

10 K. Demetriou, "Bishop Connop Thirlwall: Historian of ancient Greece," *Quaderni di Storia* 56 (2002): 49–90. P. Liddel, ed., *Bishop Thirlwall's History of Greece: A Selection* (Bristol: Bristol Phoenix Press, 2007).

11 Still worth reading is the memoir compiled by Grote's widow: Mrs Harriet Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote. Compiled from Family Documents, Private Memoranda, and Original Letters To and From Various Friends*, 2nd edn (London: John Murray, 1873). M.L. Clarke, *George Grote. A Biography* (London: Athlone Press, 1962) is a sober biography. There is more of a biographical nature in Vaio, J. "George Grote" in W.W. Briggs & W.M. Calder III,

I wrote earlier that Grote was ‘making a case’ for democratic Athens. The rhetoric of objectivity in historiography of course forbade him from as it were coming out as a forensic advocate, but the fact is that he was a liberal, a utilitarian, and a philosophical radical, so that in his book authoritarian, conservative, and illiberal Sparta could hardly be represented as exemplary, and Grote deployed the full force of his rhetoric against it.<sup>12</sup> All the same, the full measure of the vehemence of his anti-laconism (if I may so call it) has probably yet to be taken, and this is important, since his general—not universal—depreciation of Sparta and Spartans does to a degree diminish the magnitude of his achievement in not merely rescuing democratic Athens from the condescension of posterity but making Athenian democratic institutions and values the yardstick of all Hellenism.<sup>13</sup> For the sake of this chapter, since it is neither possible nor fruitful to attempt anything like a ‘comprehensive’ account and assessment of Grote’s Sparta, I have selected three extensive passages of the *History* in which Sparta and Spartans occupy the centre of his stage: the first illustrates Grote’s take on Spartan institutions, the second is his account of the decisive battle fought in one of Hellenism’s most critical military conflicts, and the third is his character-study of one leading Spartan at another of the most critical junctures in Grecian history as that was understood by Grote.

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ed. *Classical Scholarship: A Biographical Encyclopaedia* (London & N.Y.: Garland, 1990): 119–26 and Calder, W.M. III & S. Trzaskoma (eds.), *George Grote Reconsidered. A 200th Birthday Celebration with a First Edition of his Essay ‘Of the Athenian Government’* (Hildesheim: Olm, 1996). See also the “biographical essays” in Demetriou, *Classics in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 4.

- 12 On Grote on rhetoric, see K. Whedbee, “Reclaiming rhetorical democracy: George Grote’s defense of Cleon and the Athenian demagogues,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34.4 (Fall, 2004): 71–95. For Grote on Athenian democracy and on Plato: Demetriou, *George Grote*, 1999. Macgregor Morris 2008 is a rather too impassioned defence of eighteenth-century historians, and especially Mitford, against the “myth” of Grote “as the first historian.” See Macgregor Morris, I. “Navigating the *Grotesque*; or, Rethinking Greek historiography” in J. Moore, I. Macgregor Morris & A. Bayliss (eds.), *Reinventing History. The Enlightenment Origins of Ancient History* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2008), 247–90 (289). Still worth reading is A.D. Momigliano, “George Grote and the study of Greek history” (1952), repr. in G.W. Bowersock & T.J. Cornell (eds.), *Studies on Modern Scholarship* (Berkeley, L.A. & London: University of California Press, 1994), 15–31. Cf. M.H. Chambers, “George Grote’s *History of Greece*” in Calder & Trzaskoma, *George Grote Reconsidered*, 1–22.
- 13 Morris, “Navigating the *Grotesque*; or, Rethinking Greek historiography,” 280, is of course right that the democracy Grote wanted for his own country was representative, not direct. His main practical, ideological, and philosophical difficulty was to elide the radical gulf between the two kinds.

## 1 Laws and Discipline of Lykurgus at Sparta

Such is the title of Chapter VI of Book 3 of the 12-volume edition. One notes at once the learned, Hellenic 'k' in 'Lykurgus', rather inconsistently interposed in the otherwise usual latinization of (strictly transliterated) 'Lykourgos'. The second thing one probably should note is that Grote's study of the supposed laws and discipline of and/or attributed to Lycurgus, though firmly placed within the (post-'legendary') 'earliest historical' section of the *History*, yet trespasses well beyond the lower chronological limit of the work as a whole, more than once descending to "the days of Agis III. [read 'IV.'] and Kleomenês III." (172 n. 1), i.e. the roughly quarter-century from c. 244 to 222 BC. This is because Grote, ever the consummate source-critical analyst (a legacy of his immersion in the most progressive contemporary German historiography), was perfectly alert to one important dimension of what was to be labelled a century after Grote the Spartan "mirage."<sup>14</sup> In passing, therefore, it is worth noting that his discussion of the third-century reforms at Sparta contains a striking use of a comparative exemplum: "the fancies, longings, and indirect suggestions of the present [sc. of the two reformist kings] assumed the character of recollections out of the early, obscure, and extinct historical past," to which Grote offered as a parallel the "false colouring . . . attached by the political feeling of recent days to matters of ancient history, such as the Saxon Witenagemote, the Great Charter, the rise and growth of the English House of Commons, or even the Poor Law of Elizabeth"—and that despite the fact that "modern times" were "far more favourable to historical accuracy" (3.168).<sup>15</sup> This seems to me, as it has to Peter Liddel, a case of Grote touching upon, maybe even inventing, the remarkably fertile idea of invented tradition.<sup>16</sup>

Whether that is so or not, Grote's attention to the—extant, written—sources for Sparta is primary, basic and constant. The Chapter begins with what he ominously calls the "ominous" exordium of Plutarch's biography—or rather "biography"—of Lycurgus and "the unsatisfactory nature of the accounts which we read," and its final paragraph starts "Scanty as our information is. . ."

14 Ollier, F. *Le mirage spartiate*, 2 vols (Paris: de Boccard, 1933–43, repr. in 1 vol. New York: Arno Press, 1973).

15 For Grote on "Grecian legends and early history," the title of an excellent 1843 essay, repr. in Alexander Bain, ed. *The Minor Works of George Grote, with Remarks on his Intellectual Character, Writings and Speeches* (London: John Murray, 1873), see G.L. Huxley, "George Grote on Early Greece" in Calder & Trzaskoma, *George Grote Reconsidered*, 23–42.

16 E.J. Hobsbawm & T.O. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Between start and end—some 75 pages (3.112–186)—there are innumerable discursive, historiographical footnotes. Pride of place among those goes, and not only for its length, to a footnoted discussion of the (in)divisibility of the Spartan *klaros* (“lot”), which spreads over four whole pages and takes in the reigning gods of Spartan historiography—J.C.F. Manso and K.-O. Müller among the Germans, Thirlwall of the Anglophones—as well as ancient sources ranging very widely in date and approach from Herodotus and “Herakleidês Ponticus” to Aelian. Topics covered in the Chapter include the following, in this order: genealogy and date of Lycurgus, institutions and constitution ascribed to Lycurgus, position and privileges of the kings, power of the Ephors, Grote’s own classification of the Spartan constitution, tribal and local divisions of the Spartans, populations of Laconia—Spartans, Perioeci and Helots, land-tenure, the mess-system, the “public training or discipline” (*Agoge*), position of women, military matters, population decline, and finally—a prelude to the next Chapter VII, “Conquests of Sparta towards Arcadia and Argolis”—the conquest of Laconia.

After the source-critical introit Grote proceeds to canvass the “very different stories” regarding which of the two royal houses Lycurgus may have belonged to and the “enormous difference as to the time in which he lived” (3.115 n.), Grote himself inclining to a date in the late ninth century inferred from Thucydides (1.18). Oddly to our way of thinking today, he then spends more time refuting Müller’s claim that Spartan institutions were generically Dorian—they were “peculiar to herself” (116)—than in questioning Lycurgus’s very existence. Perhaps even for the ultra-sceptical Grote that would have been a step too far. He makes very sensible, footnoted comments on the so-called “Great Rhētra” (Plut. *Lyc.* 6), the authenticity of which he unhesitatingly endorses, arguing that the so-called “Rider” was indeed added later to a text distinguished by its “antique simplicity” and that the addition “evidently betokens a previous dispute and refractory behaviour on the part of the assembly” (3.120 n.).

Turning to “the political constitution of Sparta ascribed to Lycurgus,” Grote gives a “brief sketch . . . of the Spartan government” (3.122–131), beginning with the kings and the Ephors (the “extraordinary ascendancy of these magistrates,” 3.125, “the administration of the ephors,” 130), and their mutual relationship. Over-influenced by Aristotle, he believes that the Ephorate, introduced by Lycurgus according to Herodotus (1.65), limited “the authority of the kings to little more than the exclusive command of the military force” (3.121), yet acutely adds that “importance in many ways was still left to them,” including what he might (had he been able to read Max Weber) have wanted to call their charisma. They were all, regardless of their personal qualities, “sustained by so great a force of traditional reverence” (3.127). He should perhaps therefore have reflected harder on the actual power wielded by Cleomenes I and Agesilaus II,

not to mention by Cleomenes III (Agis IV, for all his reforming zeal, was in a rather different practical case). On the powers of the Ephors and the manner of their election, he is uniformly excellent. But of the Gerousia, revealingly called "the senate," he says not nearly enough nor does he tease out its huge significance—not that he is alone in that underestimation by any means. Ordinarily, perhaps, one might have wanted to agree that "the large and imposing language in which its political supremacy is spoken of by Demosthenês and Isokratês exceeds greatly the reality of the case" (3.130), but that sits ill with Grote's own view (*ibid.*) that Xenophon's "little Ecclesia" (*Hell.* 3.3.8) was essentially the Gerousia and ignores Plutarch's entirely plausible statement in the *Agis* (ch. 11), even more plausible for the Classical fifth and fourth centuries than for the time of Agis IV, that the importance of the Gerousia resided in its power of *probouleusis*.<sup>17</sup> On the Spartan Assembly, in contrast, he has much that is penetrating to reveal.

His overall judgment, that "for the most part, it seems to have been little better than an inoperative formality" (3.129), and so the Spartan *ekkletoi* are not at all to be compared to the *ecclesia* of the democratic Athenians (3.130 n. 2), is tempered only a little by his correct recognition that "its consent on considerable matters and for the passing of laws . . . was indispensable" (130) and by his comparison of Sthenelaidas' call in 432 for an unprecedented and exception division (rather than the usual voting by shouting) to the practice of "the Speaker of the English House of Commons when his decision in favour of Ay or No is questioned by any member" (3.130). But what mattered most to Grote was that he could not see how an Assembly so constituted would be "a practical check" on the all-powerful Ephors; and it was chiefly because of their power, together with the judicial powers of the Gerousia, that he had no hesitation in concluding that in respect of its *politeia* Sparta was "in substance a close . . . oligarchy" (3.131). Whether it was also in substance an "unscrupulous and well-obeyed" oligarchy is perhaps more questionable. At any rate, it was certainly remarkably stable, and over a very long period, which, according to Grote "was one of the main circumstances . . . of the astonishing ascendancy which the Spartans acquired over the Hellenic mind, and *which they will not be found at all to deserve by any superior ability in the conduct of affairs*" (my emphasis—I shall return to that in the next section). Yet—and here Grote shows himself to be the disciple of Edward Gibbon—for all this outward show of continuity and stability at least in "the unchanged title and forms of the government,"

17 A. Andrewes, *Probouleusis: Sparta's Contribution to the Technique of Government* (Oxford Inaugural Lecture, 1954).



really “the causes of internal degeneracy” were at work none the less, “undermining its efficiency” (3.132). Among these he includes most prominently *oliganthropia* (shrinkage of the citizen body) and impoverishment of ordinary Spartans, allied to the constant “danger” arising from Perioeci and Helots.

After a rather brisk resume of the ‘tribal’ system at Sparta, Grote moves on to a more minute examination of the “orders of men who inhabited Laconia” (150), that is, of the three main classes and statuses of the state’s population: Spartans, Perioeci and Helots. He will return to the Spartans later. Mostly, the account of the Perioeci is unexceptionable, and a lengthy, lexicographical footnote on the possible meanings of “perioikoi” exemplary (3.136–7 n. 3); but today it is very strange to read the confident assertion that “the free inhabitants of Amyklæe must have been Perioeki” (3.136). How he squared that with his explicit recognition of the cardinal importance to the Spartans of the annual Hyacinthia festival is hard to say. The *agoge* system of the Spartans will be dealt with at some length in its proper place (3.151–3), but already in connection with the Spartans’ management of relations with the Perioeci (3.138) Grote cannot resist introducing *husteron proteron* what he (following Thucydides and Aristotle, but without explicit acknowledgement of either here—though Thucydides is cited at 9.261, ch. LXXII) considers to be the on balance deleterious effects of the “so rigorously peculiar” education of a Spartan: “while it imparted force, fortitude, and regimental precision, . . . at the same time it rendered him harsh, unaccommodating, and incapable of sympathizing with the ordinary march of Grecian feeling,—not to mention the rapacity and love of money . . . which we should hardly have expected to find in the pupils of Lykurgus” (3.138–9). One instantly thinks of two exceptions to that massive over-generalization: Brasidas (perfectly capable of sympathy with ordinary Greek sentiment) and Lysander (insensible to the temptations of personal wealth—as Grote himself will later acknowledge). But on the economic role of the Perioeci in trade and manufacture Grote is entirely sound (3.144).

Likewise on the Helots, to whom he devotes six full pages, and whom he sees essentially as “serfs bound to the soil,” using as an analogy the “Coloni” of the Later Roman Empire. That analogy is controversial today—on both the Greek and the Roman sides of the equation—as indeed are his notion that they belonged “not so much to the master as to the state” (3.145) and his acceptance as “fact” of Thucydides’s account (4.80) of a “dark and bloody deed” (3.147) perpetrated by the Spartans in massacring some 2000 Helots by treacherous stealth: “We see here a fact which demonstrates unequivocally the impenetrable mystery in which the proceedings of the Spartan government were wrapped” (3.147–8). I myself find all those notions and views to be still defensible, but the current controversy is a fair token of the intense liveliness

of Spartan studies today.<sup>18</sup> Grote, moreover, had not one but two handy comparisons upon which to draw for further corroboration, the Venetian Council of Ten (the Spartans were, he held, even more viciously repressive than they) and the Athenian Assembly (the Spartans never acquired “the habits of a public assembly,” 3.148). I would agree with the latter comparison at least; comparison as a method is typically most illuminating when it highlights contrast. Grote then not unwillingly broaches the Helot-terrorising Krypteia—a “real practice” (which he would have been able to illuminate all the more vividly had he been in possession of the comparative anthropological data that became available only in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries); but interestingly he was unwilling to believe that the Ephors really did openly proclaim war on the Helots upon entering office, since that would have violated the Spartan norm of official secrecy, and in any case—and here he sounds too much like Plutarch—it could hardly have “emanated from Lykurgus,” presumably because he was too kindly a soul to sink to that degree of brutality. I am far from alone in finding the public proclamation of the Ephors all too credible, both because it delivered the required religious sanction and sanctification for official murder, and because the Krypteia though literally secret in name was an all too open secret in fact. Grote ends his discussion of the Helots with consideration of those who were manumitted, wondering aloud whether at least some of them might have congregated in Sparta alongside the Hypomeiones (whom he considered to be, as some of them surely were, disfranchised Spartan citizens).

From the “orders of men who inhabited Laconia” (and Messenia) Grote turns to consider a number of the special Spartan social institutions—land-(re)division, the ban on coining and private use of coinage, the ban on participation by Spartans in productive activity including agriculture, the public messes (“Syssitia”), and then, at greatest length, the upbringing. Here, rather amusingly, Grote introduces a historical comparison with the aim of diminishing the degree of endurance (*karteria*) required of a Spartan boy—as contrasted with that required of a Mandan Indian boy undergoing a manhood-transition ritual! (3.152 n. 1). Yet Grote does nevertheless commend the Spartan training as “excellent” since it combined “strength and agility with universal aptitude

18 The names of Stephen Hodkinson and Anton Powell deserve special mention *honoris causa*, for their role severally and jointly in reinvigorating Spartan studies over the past three decades. I draw attention especially to Part V (“Spartan exceptionalism? A Debate”) of Hodkinson, ed. *Sparta: Comparative Approaches* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2009) where Hodkinson debates with Mogens Herman Hansen. Grote was in no doubt of the “exceptionalist” position, which Hansen defends, successfully in my view, and Hodkinson vigorously contests.

and endurance" (3.153) rather than equipping the boys for success only in athletic competition. He mentions but makes no judgmental comment on Sparta's "licensed" thieving.

Having dealt with the males, he turns to the females, prefacing his discussion with "Of all the attributes of this remarkable community, there is none more difficult to make out clearly than the condition and character of the Spartan women" (3.153). He fails to make the—to us—obvious point that this is in part because all the written sources are by non-Spartan males; instead, he compares and contrasts the savage denunciations of Aristotle with the warm commendations of Xenophon and Plutarch—and sides, rather remarkably, with the latter. In fact, his account is more or less merely a paraphrase of theirs, except that somehow he has invented a practice of a wife's "visiting her husband in his barrack in the disguise of male attire" (3.155). This seems to be a conflation of Plutarch's claim that husbands, before they were permitted to cohabit with their wives at the age of thirty, would sneak off to have sex with them at home and sire even several offspring thereby, and Plutarch's description of the wedding night ritual in which a wife would don a masculine cloak and belt before having sex with her new spouse. And in the end Grote does his best to save Aristotle's phenomena by attributing the philosopher's broad-brush condemnation of the license and licentiousness of all the women to the bad behaviour of only certain wealthy, propertied Spartan women (3.156).

After his expatiating on relations between the sexes, it comes as something of a shock that Grote sums up his account of Spartan education or training by saying that it is in this, not in either her laws or her political constitution, that "the distinctive attribute of Sparta is to be sought" (3.158). For was not the education a—key—part of Sparta's laws, what Xenophon (e.g., *Lac. Pol.* 14) and others call "the laws of Lycurgus"? Most of the last thirty pages or so of the Chapter (3.158–186) are given over to a discussion of property ownership and especially land-division at Sparta—and it would be frankly tedious and unrewarding to go over Grote's discussion, which has been repeated endlessly, and mostly fruitlessly, ever since.<sup>19</sup> I will just mention that he very properly dismisses as fiction the so-called "*rhētra* of Epitadeus" and quote his exemplary overall conclusion: Lycurgus "introduced equal severity of discipline not equality of property" (3.181). However, before he goes into the land-tenure and property system, Grote significantly cannot resist delivering one last word on the effects of the Spartan education—and it is not a kind, let alone a favourable word: "the Spartan character formed by Lykurgus is of a low type, rendered savage and fierce by exclusive and overdone bodily discipline,—destitute even

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19 S.J. Hodkinson, *Property & Wealth in Classical Sparta* (London & Swansea: Duckworth & The Classical Press of Wales, 2000) is a shining exception.

of the elements of letters,—immersed in their own narrow specialities, and taught to despise all that lay beyond,—possessing all the qualities requisite to procure dominion, but none of those calculated to render dominion popular or salutary to the subjects” (3.159–60). Ouch. Not even Aristotle—who memorably opined that the city’s educational “toils” (*ponoi*) rendered the Spartans “wildbeastlike” (*thêriôdeis*)—could have put it more brutally than that. (But Grote was wrong to accept from Isocrates the canard that all Spartans always were illiterate.)

## 2 Battle of Plataea

Grote’s account of the Graeco-Persian Wars finds its place in the Mitchell & Caspari selection for the simple reason that, following Herodotus (7.139), Grote was in no doubt that Athens should be awarded the palm of honour for the loyalist Greeks’ victory, even though—or rather because—it was actually the Spartans who were in overall leadership of the united (such as it was) Hellenic resistance to the Persian onslaught (see esp. 5.337–8). We recall here Grote’s judgment quoted earlier that the Spartans “will not be found at all to deserve by any superior ability in the conduct of affairs... the astonishing ascendancy which the Spartans acquired over the Hellenic mind.” The following account of the Spartans’ conduct of the Battle of Plataea is a prime exemplification in narrative exposition of that excoriating judgment. I take up Grote’s story in the winter of 480/79 (5.257).

Mardonius through his vassal King Alexander I of Macedon has attempted to suborn the Athenians and woo them away from the Hellenic alliance led by Sparta. In response the Athenians have delivered a paean to, indeed offered a definition of, what Herodotus (8.144.2) programmatically makes them call *to hellênikon*—‘Greekness’. Grote’s comment immediately sets the tone for what is to come: “Such unshaken fidelity on the part of the Athenians to the general cause of Greece... was the just admiration of their descendants and the frequent theme of applause by their orators” (5.257). Grote does not seem to see, or want to see, that it is precisely the Athenian-inflected nature of the evidence—not only that of the Athenian orators but also that of the non-Athenian but pro-Athenian Herodotus—and the endlessly repeated celebrations and commemorations that have imparted such an anti-Spartan hue to the source material for the Graeco-Persian Wars overall.<sup>20</sup> Against which trumpeted Athenian virtue there is contrasted most sharply the “selfish and ungenerous

20 Cartledge, *After Thermopylae. The Oath of Plataea and the End of the Graeco-Persian Wars* (N.Y. & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

neglect" of the valiantly patriotic Athenians that was exhibited "among the Spartans and Peloponnesians" (5.258). The rationalist Grote (taking a leaf out of Thucydides's book) implicitly scorns Spartan King Cleombrotus's superstitious regard for a solar eclipse and the Spartans' pious preoccupation with celebrating the Apolline festival of the Hyacinthia which led them to neglect "both the duties of fidelity towards an exposed ally, and the bond of an express promise" (to send troops forthwith across the Isthmus) (5.259). The Athenians' second enforced retreat to Salamis "might have been obviated had the Spartans executed their covenant, which would have brought about the battle of Plataea two months earlier than it was actually fought" (5.259).

Eventually, the Spartans do dispatch a force to aid the Athenians and take on Mardonius in Boeotia—and it is a massive and mighty one: 5000 Spartiates, 5000 Perioeci and no fewer than 35,000 Helots (allegedly). For Grote, however, this was but "an expiation, imperfect, tardy, and reluctant, for foregoing desertion and breach of promise" (5.261). Connop Thirlwall had suggested a more charitable explanation than mere moral turpitude for the Spartans' delay and secrecy in the dispatch of this force, but Grote in a footnote (5.261 n.) will have none of that: the—for him, typically Spartan—conduct of the Ephors was "selfish, narrow-minded and insensible to any dangers except what are present and obvious." It is worth adding that Mitchell & Caspari too (2001: 280 n.) at this point felt obliged to call attention to what they take to be the time at which Herodotus was compiling his account, a time when the cry of "Spartan perfidy" was again in the air.

Once the Spartans are at last in the field of what will become the Battle of Plataea, Grote keeps up his more or less relentlessly critical account of the Spartans' conduct of the campaign, following Herodotus's "clear, impressive, and circumstantial narrative" throughout, since the much later narrative of Diodorus is "at once diffuse and uninformative" (5.272 n.). Thus Grote believes the reported mission of Alexander I of Macedon, he believes that a switching of flanks between the Spartans and Athenians was indeed proposed—and botched—by the Greeks' overall commander, Regent Pausanias of Sparta. He believes the story of Spartan commander Amompharetus and his—highly implausible—vote/pebble (*psephos*) insubordination. The only slight and grudging mitigation he will allow is that, when the Spartans voted by acclamation to support the Athenians' title to the left wing against the rival claims of the Tegeans, "In the field even [!] Lacedaemonians followed those democratical forms which pervaded so generally Grecian military operations" (5.270).

When it came to trying conclusions, when the Spartans and the next-door Tegeans were left alone to face the brunt of the strictly Persian element of Mardonius' army, even then Grote manages to diminish the Spartans'

achievement in two ways—first, by delivering huge praise of the Persians' courage (5.281), and then by quickly moving on to emphasize the Spartans' hopelessness at siege-warfare (5.283). Both of those points are taken straight out of Herodotus, of course, but what Grote somehow manages to omit is to quote that model historian's encomiastic classification of the Battle as "the fairest/finest victory of absolutely all those we know" (9.64.1), a victory, moreover, which he credits to "Pausanias the son of Cleombrotus." In a footnote (5.283 n.) Grote agrees that Aeschylus in 472 was right to single out the "Dorian spear" (*Persians* 805–24), but, whereas Pindar (*Pythian* 1.76) credits the Spartans (and Athenians), Grote here gives the credit for the Plataea victory vaguely to "the Peloponnesians"—and then later on, further diminishing the Spartans' role, writes that "The real victors in the battle of Plataea were the Lacedaemonians, Athenians and Tegeans" (5.287).

Later, Grote will have occasion to notice the death of Regent Pausanias at Sparta in unhappy circumstances. Grote's obituary notice violates the *nil nisi bonum de mortuis* nostrum to a spectacular degree: his Pausanias was "a Greek who reached the pinnacle of renown simply from the accident of his lofty descent and of his being general at Plataea, where it does not appear that he displayed any superior qualities" (5.364). That obituary dictum flies in the face of Grote's own earlier report of "the general opinion" of the Greeks themselves at the time of Plataea, which "seems" to have "recognised the Lacedaemonians and Pausanias as bravest among the brave" (5.289), but it takes into account specifically what Grote believed to be Pausanias' subsequent medizing treason and reflects generically his low opinion of the Spartans' character, to a prime example of which I now turn.

### 3 The Character of Lysander

Finally, but by no means least, I attempt to display and dissect Grote's character-portrait—or should that be character-assassination?—of one of the most remarkable Spartans of any age, Lysander (Greek Lusandros), whose fame is such that he became the eponym of a type of airplane produced before and during the Second World War. Grote's description, already quoted above, of the effects of the Spartan education on the formation of the typical Spartan's character could have been designed for Lysander—in fact, I rather suspect it was actually based on Grote's perception and estimate of Lysander's. In what follows, I shall concentrate on Grote's study of Lysander's character rather than his achievements, in Roman terms his *mores* rather than his *res gestae*; but it has to be said that probably contributing materially to the negative



impression was the fact that—as Grote puts it in only his second sentence referring to Lysander—he belonged to “that trio of eminent Spartans, from whom all the capital wounds of Athens proceeded, during the course of this long war” (the other two members of this unholy trinity being Brasidas and Gylippus) (8.123).

Lysander is introduced in Chapter LXIV as *navarch* in succession to Cratesippidas and as a *mothax*, which status-term Grote understands to refer to the poverty of his parents rather than to any admixture of Helot blood (8.122–3 and 123 n. 1). Then without further ado Grote launches into a page-long summation almost of Lysander’s whole career in general terms, with a very decided, strongly Plutarchan emphasis on his morality (8.123–4). The portrait is not without shades of light: “thoroughly competent” as an officer, “indifferent to the temptations either of money or of pleasure,” “his observance of the rules of discipline had been rigorous and exemplary.” But the dark shades cast a far heavier pall: “great talents for intrigue,” “altogether unscrupulous in the prosecution of ambitious projects, either for his country or himself,” “recklessness about falsehood and perjury,” “a selfish ambition—for promoting the power of his country . . . in subservience to his own,” “reckless immorality of means” surpassing even that of Alcibiades, “he seems to have been cruel.” Finally, the killer punch: “the basis of his disposition was Spartan, tending to merge appetite, ostentation, and expansion of mind, all in the love of command and influence—not Athenian, which tended to the development of many and diversified impulses; ambition being one, but only one, among the number” (8.123–4).

Only then, having delivered himself of this pre-emptive moralistic strike, does Grote proceed with narrating and explaining the facts of Lysander’s subsequent career as conqueror of Athens. By the spring of 404, following the defeat, surrender and overthrow of the Athenian democracy, Lysander wielded “an extent of real power greater than any individual Greek either before or after” (8.212; cf. his “overweening ascendancy,” 9.287). So great indeed was his power to determine the course of Aegean Greek affairs (Grote rather exaggerates when he writes “His personal views were the grand determining circumstance throughout Greece,” 8.234) that Grote was led into a flight of not so much ‘What if?’ as ‘If only’ speculation, imagining somewhat contradictorily how much better things would have turned out had the Spartan Callicratidas won and survived the Battle of Arginusae . . . As it was, sadly, “We see how important was the personal character of the general so placed” (8.234)—that is, in that position of determining influence already described. Yet positioning Lysander on quite such a high pedestal does have one rather awkward, historiographical consequence—the problem of how to explain the rapidity and sharp angle



of Lysander's descent from this precipitous eminence. Grote frankly rather funks this. Lysander himself, trumped by King Pausanias at Athens in 403 in Chapter LXV, disappears from Grote's view almost until Chapter LXXII, where reference is made again to his "overwhelming dictatorship" (9.161). It is not until a few pages further on that one learns that it was "the inordinate personal ambition of Lysander" that had "offended King Pausanias and the Spartan Ephors" with regard to Athens. That coupled with the opposition of Persian satrap Pharnabazus to the behaviour of Lysander's imperial dekararchies lent weight to "the enemies of Lysander at Sparta" (9.274), though who these were is not further specified. This explanation of his downfall is summed up at 9.302–3, but it sits uneasily with the claim that just a couple of years later, in connection with the disputed accession of his former beloved Agesilaus, Lysander's influence "continued unabated" (9.307).

Nor does it square with Grote's report that in 395 "the death of Lysander produced the most profound sorrow and resentment in Sparta" (9.358). That seemingly favourable impression had to be quickly expunged from the reader's mind, and Grote's two-page obituary notice (9.360–1) does the—hatchet—job magnificently: "his personal indifference to money seems only to have left the greater space in his bosom for that thirst of power which made him unscrupulous in satiating the rapacity, as well as in upholding the oppression, of coadjutors like the Thirty at Athens and the Decemvirs in other cities." A truly Gibbonian period. Indeed, so deeply did Grote hate and abhor Lysander that he even lambasts him for 'throw[ing] away an opportunity—such as never occurred either before or afterwards—for organizing some permanent, honourable, self-maintaining, Pan-Hellenic combination under the headship of Sparta'—even though such a combination would surely—could only—have been based on uncongenially oligarchical, not democratical, lines. The fate of democratic-leaning King Pausanias and the whole career of King Agesilaus II are proof enough of that.<sup>21</sup>



In summation and conclusion, Grote's representations of Sparta's 'Lycurgan' institutions, its conduct of the Battle of Plataea, and the character of Lysander can hardly be said to be positive. Indeed, they are rather savagely negative, for the most part, and in that they are typical of Grote's Sparta as a whole. There is, however, a little more to Sparta's Grote than that. To soften and correct that overall picture somewhat, I end with a couple of mitigating instances,

21 Cartledge, *Agesilaus and the Crisis of Sparta* (London: Duckworth, 1987, repr. 2000).

both, revealingly, military in context. Grote seems least hostile to the Spartans when it is a case of evaluating their military discipline—or, exceptionally, indiscipline. The Spartans' treatment of Aristodemus, survivor of Thermopylai, after his return to Sparta clearly struck Herodotus as ungenerous to a fault. But it is made to look less barbaric by Grote by his drawing a parallel with the Swiss treatment of survivors of the August 1444 battle of St Jacob on the Birs, near Basle (5. 207 n. 1). Finally, the surrender of the remaining Spartans at Sphacteria in 425, which Thucydides (4.40) made a meal of, is rather excused by Grote's claim that "the best troops in modern times would neither incur reproach nor occasion surprise, by surrendering" in similar circumstances (6.355). Don't mention the surrender, would probably have been the Spartans' own response.<sup>22</sup>

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22 Cartledge, "Surrender in Ancient Greece" in H. Strachan & H. Afflerbach, ed. *Why Fighting Ends. A History of Surrender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

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## Grote's *Plato*

Catherine Zuckert

George Grote (1794–1871) produced one of the first multi-volume studies of Plato that have since become standard reference works for many students of ancient Greek philosophy. Like W.K.C. Guthrie's *History of Greek Philosophy* and Paul Friedländer's *Plato*, Grote's account of *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates* begins with a brief survey of earlier “pre-socratic” philosophy to set the context in which Socrates and then Plato emerged.<sup>1</sup> Like Guthrie and Friedländer, Grote then proceeds to discuss each of the dialogues separately. In striking contrast to both Guthrie and Friedländer, however, Grote does not present the dialogues in terms of Plato's philosophical development as indicated by the stage in his career at which he is thought to have written them—early, middle, or late. The author of a history of Greece is by no means opposed to developmental or contextual accounts of the philosophical works of individual authors. However, as a historian he observes that there is little to no evidence concerning the dates at which Plato wrote the dialogues. He suggests, therefore, that each dialogue should be treated as an independent work and that the differences among them should be attributed to the “occasion,” the circumstances under which Plato was writing (although, strictly speaking, these are unknown) or the particular problem Plato was addressing in each, and his recognition of his inability, in the case of the elenctic dialogues, to solve it. Like Grote himself, Plato thought that it was worthwhile simply to work out and state the difficulties encountered in answering a question—for example, what is virtue?

Although the historical, developmental account of the Platonic dialogues in terms of a supposed “chronology of composition” became dominant in the late nineteenth and most of the twentieth century (as illustrated by the work of Guthrie and Friedländer), scholars have recently become increasingly aware

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1 George Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [first published 1865]). I have followed Grote's transliteration of Sokrates and the titles of the Platonic dialogues he discusses for the sake of consistency. W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* vol. 4–5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962); Paul Friedländer, *Platon*, 2 vols. (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1928–30); *Plato*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff, 3 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

of the paucity of external evidence for that dating that Grote had already pointed out.<sup>2</sup> As a result, some contemporary scholars have begun to express more sympathy for Grote's explicitly "unsystematic" approach.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, Grote's critical observations concerning the lack of external evidence both for the dating of the composition of the dialogues and for arguments about the inauthenticity of the authorship of many of the dialogues traditionally attributed to Plato are more rigorous than his own interpretive practice. Although he emphasizes the absence of any evidence for the "development" of Plato's thought, Grote finds it difficult to believe that Plato had worked out his entire "system" (or a coherent understanding of things) when he began writing dialogues. Grote thus speculates that some were written early or are drafts of works Plato himself never completed. Moreover, by sorting the dialogues in his three volumes, in effect, into three different kinds—the purely elenctic "dialogues of search"; dialogues beginning with the *Protagoras* which contain some positive teachings, but leave the answers suggested to the major questions raised tentative or hypothetical and explicitly subject to revision; and finally dialogues such as the *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Kritias*, and *Leges*, in which Plato makes not merely dogmatic, but dictatorial political recommendations—Grote implicitly traces a development in Plato's thought that he does not defend as such. His attempt to treat each dialogue as an independent work leads him to notice important differences not only in the arguments but also in the philosophical spokesmen and their interlocutors. Because he treats (and, in effect, dismisses) such dramatic details as merely adding interest or "charm" to the arguments, however, he does not ask why Plato might have used different philosophical spokesmen to put forward different arguments, at different times and places, to different interlocutors, with markedly different results.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of the

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2 Jacob Howland, "Re-Reading Plato: The Problem of Platonic Chronology," *Phoenix* 45 (1991): 189–214; Kenneth Dorter, *Form and Good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Debra Nails, *Agora, Academy, and the conduct of Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995); and the exchange between Charles H. Kahn and Charles Griswold in *Ancient Philosophy*. See Griswold, "E Pluribus Unum? On the Platonic 'Corpus,'" *Ancient Philosophy* 19 (1999): 361–97; and Kahn, "Response to Griswold," 20 (2000): 189–93.

3 John M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: The Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), xiv; Monique Canto-Sperber, *Éthiques grecques* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001); Malcolm Schofield, "Platon à l'époque victorienne contre l'idée de système," *Revue Française d'Histoire des Idées Politiques* 37, No. 1 (2013): 59–80.

4 Like Grote, Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 50–63, argues that each dialogue should be read, initially, as an independent work. Unlike Grote, however, Strauss also sees that it is necessary to explain not only why and in what way

liberal understanding of philosophy and politics he acquired from James Mill, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill, he valorizes the “negative” critique of accepted opinions represented by Socrates as a necessary first step toward the acquisition of reasoned truth, defends the sophists as educators of active democratic citizens, and criticizes the dictatorial dogmatism of Plato’s last work.<sup>5</sup>

### Grote’s Approach to the Dialogues

The title of Grote’s *Plato* indicates its content. Although the bulk of the three six hundred page each volumes is devoted to summaries of the Platonic dialogues, followed by critical commentaries, it is not Plato so much as Sokrates whom Grote celebrates as representative of an understanding of philosophy that has been lost and should be revived.<sup>6</sup> In the Preface Grote explains that “the present work is intended as a sequel and supplement to [his] *History of Greece*.”<sup>7</sup> But he does not seem to view the history and philosophy as continuous. He certainly does not regard the history as an explanation of the

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each dialogue represents a partial view but also how these partial views can and should be put together to recapture Plato’s understanding of the whole. Placing much more emphasis on the dramatic details—characters, time, place, action and “outcome”—than Grote does, Strauss argues that each Platonic dialogue presents a partial view of the subject under discussion, because it abstracts from a relevant consideration. The teachings or arguments of the dialogues cannot, therefore, simply be added up to get to the whole. What Plato has depicted in his corpus, according to Strauss, is the noetic heterogeneity of the whole, which is composed of irreducibly different parts.

- 5 For an account of James Mill, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill’s influence on Grote, see Kyriacos N. Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy: A Study in Classical Reception* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 175–85.
- 6 Charles H. Kahn, “George Grote’s *Plato and the Companions of Sokrates*,” in *George Grote Reconsidered: A 200th Birthday Celebration with a First Edition of his Essay “Of the Athenian Government,”* ed. William M. Calder III and Stephen Trzaskoma (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1996), reports that “Gregory Vlastos used to say that Grote’s work was the best book ever written on Plato.” The reason for Vlastos’ judgment, Kahn now thinks, is that “Vlastos, like Grote, really preferred Socrates to Plato. Both of these two great Plato scholars were philosophical empiricists, who had no inner sympathy with Plato’s transcendental metaphysics” (46–47).
- 7 *Plato*, vol. 1, Preface, iii. In his *History of Greece* (London: John Murray, 1872), vol. 7, 87–174, Grote points to three “peculiarities” of Sokrates’ character: 1) his long life passed in contented poverty and in public, apostolic dialectics; 2) his strong religious persuasion or belief that he was acting on a mission from the gods; and 3) his great intellectual originality, both of subject and of method, and his power of stirring and forcing the germ of inquiry and ratiocination in others. As in his *History*, so in his *Plato*, Grote regards Xenophon as our best source of



emergence or character of the philosophy, nor does he suggest that the philosophy had much effect on the history. On the contrary, he appears to regard history and philosophy as belonging to two separate realms of human life.<sup>8</sup> According to Grote, the “sequel and supplement” to his *History* “describes a portion of Hellenic philosophy: it dwells upon eminent individuals, enquiring, theorizing, reasoning, confuting, etc., as contrasted with those collective political and social manifestations which form the matter of history, and which the modern writer gathers from Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon.” Grote had treated Sokrates and Plato as interesting characters in his *History*, but he thought that it was “impossible to do justice to either of them—above all, to Plato, with his extreme variety and abundance—except in a book of which philosophy is the principal subject, and history only the accessory” (iii).<sup>9</sup>

As a historian, Grote finds it useful, if not absolutely necessary to examine the thoughts and works of individual authors as emerging in a given context. He thus begins his *Plato* by providing a brief sketch of “Pre-Sokratic philosophy.” But he does not see Sokratic philosophy as having developed out of the works of his predecessors—even in response to the problems they were unable to resolve. On the contrary, Grote declares that he has taken “his departure from Sokrates himself.” He has inserted the chapters on the thought of Sokrates’ predecessors “mainly in order that the theories by which he found himself surrounded may not be altogether unknown.” Both in his *Plato*, and in the sixty-ninth chapter of his *History*, Grote declares, he has done his “best to throw light on the impressive and eccentric personality of Sokrates: a character original and unique, to whose peculiar mode of working on other minds I scarcely know a parallel in history. He was the generator, indirectly and through others, of a new and abundant crop of compositions—the ‘Sokratic

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knowledge of Sokrates’ practical advice and his religious convictions, but looks to Plato for knowledge of Sokrates’ philosophical innovations.

- 8 Grote, *Plato*, vol. 1, 113–20, does complain about the tendency of scholars to treat Plato as an essentially and wholly spiritual being without regard for the circumstances in which he lived and worked. Grote himself uses such observations to support his contention that Plato would not have started writing before Sokrates’ death, because his attention would have been occupied by the upheavals in Athenian politics at the end of the Peloponnesian War.
- 9 Demetriou observes that “Grote’s account will disappoint . . . one who tries on the basis of accounts put forward in the *History* and the *Plato* to elicit a picture of perfect consistence. In the former work, it was Sokrates the prophet of utilitarian thought and the originator of ethical ‘science’ that attracted a great deal of Grote’s attention. In the latter work (and possibly under the influence of J.S. Mill’s neo-utilitarian individualism), it was Sokrates the disputatist, the eristic and the revolutionary methodologist that almost monopolized his interest” (*Grote*, 243).

dialogues:' composed by many different authors, among whom Plato stands out" (1.Preface, iv).

"Pre-Sokratic" philosophers challenged traditional religious beliefs about the divine causes and character of natural phenomena, but they put forward their varied alternative explanations and gave reasons to support them without explicitly criticizing or cross-examining the opinions of others. When "the dialectic age . . . arrived, with Sokrates as its principal champion, the topics of philosophy were altered, and its process revolutionized." In his Preface Grote thus bows in the direction of the frequently repeated Ciceronian dictum "that Sokrates brought philosophy down from the heavens to the earth." But he emphasizes "what has been less observed about Sokrates, though not less true, is, that along with this change of topics he introduced a complete revolution in method." Sokrates' "peculiar gift was that of cross-examination, or the application of his Elenchus to discriminate pretended from real knowledge. He found men full of confident beliefs on these ethical and political topics . . . yet at the same time unable to give clear or consistent answers to his questions. . . . Declaring this false persuasion of knowledge, or confident unreasoned belief, to be universal, he understood as the mission of his life to expose it" (viii-ix).

To Grote, Sokrates represents "philosophy, or reasoned truth, approached in the most polemical manner; operative at first only to discredit the natural, unreasoned intellectual growth of the ordinary mind, and to generate a painful consciousness of ignorance." A long-time associate of John Stuart Mill, Grote understands the "vocation of philosophy" to be necessarily polemical: "the assertion of independent reason by individual reasoners, who dissent from the unreasoning belief which reigns authoritative in the social atmosphere around them, and who recognize no correction or refutation except from the counter-reason of others." Such philosophers will probably disagree with one another, even when they are equally free and sincere, and live in the same age and country, but surely if they belong to ages and countries far apart. But, Grote concludes, "philosophy herself has every thing to gain by such dissent; for it is only thereby that the weak and defective points of each point of view are likely to be exposed. If unanimity is not attained, at least each of the dissentients will better understand what he rejects as well as what he adopts" (vii).

Grote thus highlights the role and person of Sokrates as the embodiment of the understanding of philosophy as the process of seeking, if not ever entirely finding the truth he had acquired from Bentham and the Mills. This understanding of philosophy not only leads him to emphasize the importance of the "negative" or purely elenctic dialogues in which Sokrates refutes the opinions of his interlocutors but does not provide a positive teaching of his own. It also leads him to insist on treating "each dialogue as a separate composition." Grote

takes the dramatic setting and selection of interlocutors in each dialogue to indicate that it “represents the intellectual scope and impulse of a peculiar moment, which may or may not be in harmony with the rest.” Taking each dialogue in its own terms and not reducing it to a system or sequence is thus “absolutely indispensable to the understanding of the Platonic dialogues,” because half of the dialogues must appear to lack all meaning, unless they are construed with reference to the separate function and value of negative dialectic. “Plato would have protested not less earnestly than Cicero, against those who sought to foreclose debate, in the grave and arduous struggles for searching out reasoned truth—and to bind down the free inspirations of his intellect in one dialogue, by appealing to sentence already pronounced in another preceding. Of two inconsistent trains of reasoning, both cannot indeed be true—but both are often useful to be known and studied” (x–xi).

Grote concludes from the absence of positive conclusions in half of the Platonic dialogues that it is a mistake to try to reduce them or their contents to a consistent position, argument, or system. That conclusion flows first from his understanding of philosophy. It is buttressed, however, by his work as an historian. He dismisses the efforts of many eminent commentators—e.g., F. Schleiermacher, F. Ast, J. Socher, K.F. Hermann—to account for the different or even lack of positive outcomes in many of the dialogues in terms of Plato’s development from the dialogues he wrote “early,” then in the “middle” and “late” in his life on the basis of a simple, but devastating fact: there is no evidence establishing the date at which Plato wrote any of them.<sup>10</sup>

Grote observes that many of the scholars who attempt to find an order in Plato’s dialogues also argue that some, that is, those that don’t fit their order and understanding of what Plato could or should have written, are spurious. In light of the immense breadth, variety, and richness of the dialogues, Grote asks, who can say what Plato could or could not have imagined or written? There are, moreover, good reasons to accept the canon that has come down to us from Thrasyllus through Diogenes Laertius.

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10 I wonder, therefore, whether Grote would be pleased by Kahn’s praising him (“Grote’s *Plato*,” 45–46) for having intuited the same order of the dialogues, with three exceptions, as that put forward by later stylometric analysts. Kahn concludes, correctly in my view, that Grote’s “pluralism goes too deep to be rearranged in any tidy progression from early to middle to late Plato. It is in harmony with Grote’s own conception of the nature of philosophical activity that Plato should admit, at different times and for different purposes, quite different views of the same subjects.” But, Kahn also correctly objects that “such radical pluralism is not . . . a satisfactory position to any philosopher to be in, above all not a philosopher like Plato, for whom unity was of such supreme intellectual importance” (57).

1. The Canon rests on the authority of the Alexandrine library and its erudite librarians; whose written records went back to the days of Ptolemy Soter, and Demetrius Phalereus, within a generation after the death of Plato.
2. The manuscripts of Plato at his death were preserved in the school which he founded; where they continued for more than thirty years under the care of Speusippus and Xenokrates, who possessed personal knowledge of all that Plato had really written. After Xenokrates, they came under the care of Polemon and the succeeding Scholarchs, from whom Demetrius Phalereus probably obtained permission to take copies of them for the nascent museum or library at Alexandria—or through whom at least (if he purchased from booksellers) he could easily ascertain which were Plato's works, and which, if any, were spurious.
3. They were received into that library without any known canonical order, prescribed system, or interdependence essential to their being properly understood (1:168–69).

Diogenes reports that a librarian at Alexandria named Aristophanes organized some of the dialogues into trilogies (like Greek tragedies), but he does not say that Aristophanes was the first to suggest an organization of the dialogues. However, the fact that Aristophanes organized only some of the dialogues into trilogies does suggest that there was no observed or accepted order to the whole corpus. Moreover, Aristophanes' trilogies include works modern critics have declared to be inauthentic, such as the *Leges*, *Epinomis*, *Minos*, and *Epistolae*. Thrasyllus followed Aristophanes in proposing a dramatic basis for his ordering the dialogues into tetralogies, Grote suspects, because the analogy had been established. But Grote dismisses Thrasyllus's dramatic ordering of the dialogues (which he finds persuasive only in the case of the initial four, *Euthyphron*, *Apology*, *Kriton*, *Phaedon*) as based on a "fanciful analogy." He thinks that Thrasyllus's second principle of organization, the philosophical distinction between the dialogues of investigation or search and the dialogues of exposition or construction, is much better and, consequently, adopts it in his own exposition. Finally, Grote emphasizes, Diogenes reports that the ten dialogues (still extant) declared to be spurious were thought to be so "by common consent." In contrast to the many different "subjective" arguments declaring one or more of the dialogues accepted in the Thrasyllan canon to be inauthentic, he suggests that the unanimity among the ancient critics, "both as to all that they accepted and all that they rejected, arose from the common acquiescence in the authority of the Alexandrine library" (1:166).

Grote rejects the “natural” ordering of the dialogues in terms of their dramatic dates proposed by Edward Munk on grounds similar to those on which he dismisses attempts to order the dialogues in terms of Plato’s development. Acknowledging that there are explicit dramatic connections among some of the dialogues, Grote observes that the internal dates of many of the conversations related are unclear. As is clear from the *Menexenus* (the Platonic authorship of which is attested to by Aristotle), moreover, Plato did not shrink from using anachronisms. Finally, like other critics of Schleiermacher, Grote does not believe that Plato could have thought out and planned the whole sequence from its inception.<sup>11</sup>

Grote thus returns to Thrasyllus’s “philosophical” division of the dialogues in those of search and those of exposition. The dialogues are not historical records of conversations that actually occurred, he emphasizes; they are and should be read as Plato’s literary creations. “Aristotle declared the writing of Plato to be something between poetry and prose” (1:213). Many of Plato’s contemporaries found the dialogues composed by other Sokratic companions plain and unadorned compared to his, but for that very reason probably closer to the historical truth. As Schleiermacher observed, “Plato always puts his thoughts into the mouth of some spokesman; he never speaks in his own name” (1:214). The only works of Plato we possess are all dialogues, and they depict very different characters, topics, and modes of treatment. It is difficult to make a generalization that fits all.

Grote thinks that we can infer some of the reasons for Plato’s varied and indirect presentation of his thought from the derogatory comments he makes about writing in his letters. In the Second Letter Plato expresses his hope that the Sicilian tyrant he tried to tutor in philosophy has debated the first and highest principles of Nature often with the best minds around him, but he warns Dionysius against talking about these matters to unschooled men, who will be sure to laugh at them. Plato urges him, moreover, “to write down nothing, since what has once been written will be sure to disappear from the memory.” And

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11 In *Plato’s Philosophers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), I argue that the dialogues can be lined up, on the basis of their dramatic dates, to show the rise, development, and limitations of Socratic philosophy. Some of the dates are admittedly controversial, but the story line that emerges is clear. Unlike Munk, I am able to include all the dialogues in the traditional canon, i.e., the dramatic order I propose does not depend upon declaring some spurious or outliers. The order I find does not, moreover, presuppose Plato’s having thought out the entire series from the very beginning; he could have (and probably did) fill in and even modify the story the way James Fenimore Cooper (admittedly a much lesser author) altered the picture he gave of Natty Bumppo in *The Pioneers* in the four later Leatherstocking tales he wrote afterwards.

he adds, "I have never myself written anything upon these subjects. There neither is, nor shall there ever be, any treatise of Plato. The opinions called by the name of Plato are those of Sokrates, in his days of youthful vigour and glory" (1:222–23). In his Seventh Letter Plato then explains, "I should consider it the proudest deed in my life, as well as a signal benefit to mankind, to bring forward an exposition of Nature luminous to all. But I think the attempt would be nowise beneficial, except to a few, who require only slight direction to enable them to find it for themselves; to most persons it would do no good, but would only fill them with empty conceit of knowledge, and with contempt for others. These matters cannot be communicated in words as other sciences are. Out of repeated debates on them, and much social intercourse, there is kindled suddenly a light in the mind, . . . which, when once generated, keeps itself alive" (1:223). In the *Phaedrus*, Grote observes, Plato puts some of the same objections to writing in the mouth of Sokrates: writing things down not only tends to weaken the internal memory, but writings also say the same things to all readers and cannot answer questions about their meaning.

Grote thus declares that Plato's "writings are altogether dramatic. All opinions on philosophy are enunciated through one or other of his spokesmen. . . . We read indeed in several of his dialogues (*Phaedon*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and others) dogmas advanced about the highest and most recondite topics of philosophy: but they are all advanced under the name of Sokrates, *Timaeus*, etc. . . . Even in the *Leges*, the most dogmatical of all his works, the dramatic character and the borrowed voice are kept up" (1:226). A reader might think that Grote would, therefore, emphasize the differences among the philosophical spokesmen Plato features in the dialogues. As we shall see, however, Grote argues that all the characters are equally Plato's creations and thus speak equally for Plato. He does not attribute a consistent position—or even mode of arguing—to Sokrates. He puts arguments in the mouths of different characters, at various times and places, according to the purpose of the specific dialogue. And each dialogue is different, because Plato thought no written exposition could satisfy the test of true learning: that a student be "able both to apply to others, and himself endure from others, a Sokratic *Elenchus*" (1:229).

Acknowledging that some of Plato's unwillingness to write for the public in his own name might be attributed to "caution produced by the fate of Sokrates" as well as to his preference for the Sokratic mode of inquiry, Grote is unwilling to speculate on what, if any opinions Plato withheld from the public. He concludes simply that "the borrowed names under which [Plato] wrote, and the veil of dramatic fiction, gave him greater freedom as to the thoughts enunciated, and were adopted for the express purpose of acquiring greater freedom." But in response to the thesis now associated with the "Tübingen school," Grote

observes, "how far the lectures which [Plato] delivered to his own special auditory differed from the opinions made known in his dialogues to the general reader . . . are questions which we have no sufficient means of answering" (1.231). However, in view of dialogues such the *Timaeus*, *Parmenidès*, *Philèbus*, *Theaetétus*, *Sophistès*, and *Politikus*, it is not possible to affirm that Plato's writings were merely popular, as opposed to his more scientific lectures.

What Grote finds most worthy of note not merely in Plato's indirect mode of writing, but in his dramatic presentation of Sokrates is the understanding of philosophy "as a search for truth still unknown, not as an explanation of the truth by one who knows it" (1.238). As a result of this understanding of philosophy, "the relation of teacher and student is altogether suppressed. . . . The sentiment of authority, instead of being invoked and worked up, as is generally done in philosophy, is formally disavowed and practically put aside" (1.239). Plato wrote the dialogues to inspire "his readers with much of the same interest in the process of dialectic enquiry which he evidently felt in his own bosom. The charm, with which he invests the process of philosophizing, is one main cause of the preservation of his writings." Indeed, Grote comments, "The process of philosophizing is one not naturally attractive except to a few minds; the more therefore do we owe to the colloquy of Sokrates and the writing of Plato, who handled it so as to diffuse the appetite for enquiry, and for sifting dissentient opinions. The stimulating and suggestive influence exercise by Plato—the variety of new roads pointed out to the free enquiring mind—are in themselves sufficiently valuable—whatever we may think of the positive results in which he himself acquiesced" (1.176–77).

### The Dialogues of Search

Grote "begins with those dialogues which delineate Sokrates, and which confine themselves to the subjects and points of view belonging to him, known as he is upon the independent testimony of Xenophon." He thus proceeds from the Platonic *Apology* to the "dialogues which depart most widely from Sokrates, and which are believed to be the products of Plato's most advanced age—*Timaeus*, *Kritias*, and *Leges*." Between the beginning and end, he examines "the intermediate dialogues according as they seem to approximate or recede from Sokrates and the negative dialectic." But, here, he admits, "the reasons for preference are noway satisfactory" (1.279). Since Grote himself gives no reasons for the particular order in which he presents the individual dialogues, I have had to try to extract them from his summaries and comments.

From the very beginning, Grote proves unable to hold consistently to his own general interpretive strictures. Having declared that Plato's "writings are



altogether dramatic," and that the dialogues "exist as distinct imaginary conversations, composed by the same author at unknown times" (1.278), he declares Plato's *Apology of Socrates* to be an exception. Depicting "the real Sokrates" (1.357), Plato's *Apology* is either a record of what Socrates actually said to the Athenian jury—or, at the very least, what Plato thinks that he should have said. In either case Grote thinks "it contains more of pure Sokratism than any other composition of Plato." It displays none of the "taste for cosmical speculation, and that transcendental dogmatism, which formed one among the leading features of Plato as distinguished from Sokrates" (1.282). It shows Sokrates denying that he possesses any wisdom, except that he lacks it, his consequent denial that he could or did teach anyone anything, and the cross-examinations he made of others to show that they did not possess the knowledge they claimed. Grote takes Socrates at his word, that these cross-examinations were imposed upon him as a duty by the God of Delphi (even though he recognizes that the Athenian jurors might not have believed it), and that Sokrates spoke with anyone and everyone indiscriminately in the marketplace (although Plato never shows him doing so).<sup>12</sup> Grote acknowledges that neither of Sokrates' two most eminent companions could endure to restrict his competence within such narrow limits, and that many of Sokrates' contemporaries as well as later interpreters have taken his claim not to possess any wisdom to be ironical. But, he insists, Sokrates' negative refutations of the purported wisdom of others revealed problems; they did not and do not give rise to any positive doctrines. "The creation and furtherance of individual, self-thinking minds, each instigated to form some rational and consistent theory for itself, is a material benefit"; and "a large proportion of Plato's dialogues have no other purpose or value" (1.293).

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12 Although Grote repeatedly asserts that Xenophon presented "the historical Sokrates" in contrast to Plato's literary depiction, in his *Plato* he does not even mention Xenophon's account of *Sokrates' Defense to the Jury* in which the philosopher tells Hermogenes that he intentionally sought to provoke the jurors to convict him, because hemlock constituted an easy way to die before he lost his rational faculties. In his *History*, vol. 7, 141–64, Grote had attempted to reconcile Plato and Xenophon's somewhat divergent accounts of the philosopher's decision to stand trial and his speech in his own defense by arguing that Sokrates provoked the jury to convict him, because he was old and thought that the gods might even have mandated his death under these circumstances. He recognized that he would not be able to exercise the extraordinary influence he had on those who listened to him conversing for long, but that he could leave behind an exalted reputation. Grote noted that Xenophon's *Apology* "bears a very erroneous title, and may possibly not be the composition of Xenophon, . . . but it has every appearance of being a work of the time" (144 n. 1) and so provides generally trustworthy historical evidence.

After the *Apology*, Grote turns to the *Kriton*, which seems to constitute a kind of sequel. Plato wanted to restore Sokrates to harmony with his fellow citizens, Grote suggests, by presenting the philosopher as a “citizen not merely of ordinary loyalty, but of extraordinary patriotism.” He puts into the mouth of Sokrates a rhetorical harangue . . . , which he supposes himself to hear from personified Nomos or Athens, claiming for herself and her laws plenary and unmeasured obedience from all her citizens, as a covenant due to her from each.” This speech would have pleased all the Athenian statesmen and orators Sokrates criticizes elsewhere, but it does not fit the isolated and eccentric dissenter we see in the *Apology* and *Gorgias*. However, Plato does show Sokrates agreeing to accept the penalty that he proclaims has unjustly been imposed upon him, because he does not believe that anyone should act unjustly. By declaring “the paramount authority of individual reason and conscience” (1.304), Sokrates here enunciates the Protagorean dogma, *Homo Mensura*, that he criticizes in the *Theaetetus*. In sum, Grote concludes, Plato’s Sokrates does not present consistent arguments; in the negative dialogues he does, however, consistently represent the importance of each individual’s exercising his reason for himself.

In contrast to his *History* (7.68, 85), where he states that Plato depicts Sokrates primarily in his *Apology*, *Kriton*, and *Phaedon*, in his *Plato* Grote does not proceed from the *Kriton* to the *Phaedon*, which seems to follow it dramatically. Instead he moves back (dramatically speaking) to the *Euthyphron*, because it “has a certain bearing on the character and exculpation of Sokrates” (1.310). Whereas in his *Memorabilia* Xenophon defended Sokrates from the charge of impiety by showing that he went through the motions of making all the public sacrifices and prayers required by law, Grote suggests, Plato defends his teacher in a more authentically Sokratic fashion by having him interrogate a true believer and showing that someone who accepts the stories traditionally told about the gods cannot give a consistent account of what piety requires. Emphasizing Sokrates’ cross-examination of Euthyphro rather than his introduction of the notion of an “idea,” Grote characterizes their attempt to answer the question, what piety is, merely as bearing on “Platonic ethics” and observes that the question is never answered in the Platonic dialogues.

Whereas the *Kriton* and *Euthyphron* constitute further defenses of Sokrates against the charge of impiety, Grote suggests, in the *Alkibiades I* and *II* Plato responds to the charge that Sokrates corrupted the young by showing how the philosopher led the talented young Athenian to see that he did not know what he thought that he did. (He also notes that such humiliating lessons must be delivered to the young, if they are to have the anticipated effects.) Grote devotes

most of his effort to countering the charges of critics who maintained that the dialogues are not authentic, primarily by observing that Plato's accounts of Sokrates' two conversations with Alkibiades present pictures of the interlocutors similar to those found in Xenophon. Although the initial description fits the real dispositions and circumstances of the historical Alkibiades (described by Thucydides and Xenophon) and the ideas contained in both dialogues are also to be found in the *Apology*, Grote does not think that Sokrates actually convinced the ambitious young Athenian to join him in a search for what is truly good, because his "historical career is altogether adverse to the hypothesis. The Platonic picture is an *ideal*, drawn from what may have been actually true about other interlocutors of Sokrates [like Euthydemus in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*], and calculated to reply to Melêtus and his allies" (1.355).

As in his depiction of Sokrates' two conversations with Alkibiades, so in his depiction of Sokrates' two conversations with the sophist Hippias, Grote notes, Plato presents a consistent characterization of the interlocutor. Because in this case the characterization is so obviously sarcastic and dismissive, Grote suspects that these dialogues must be among Plato's early writings. In the *Hippias Major* Sokrates and the sophist are unable to define the beautiful or noble (*kalon*) in itself. When Hippias "accuses Sokrates of never taking into his view Wholes, and of confining his attention to separate parts and fragments, obtained by logical analysis and subdivision" (1.384), Grote suggests that he is pointing to the competition then raging in Athens between the rhetoricians and dialecticians. Whereas the rhetoricians argued on the basis of commonly accepted opinions and used specific examples to illustrate their points, dialecticians like the Platonic Sokrates (or the historical Sokrates depicted by Xenophon) insisted on the necessity of defining terms generally and abstractly. Grote denies that the two kinds of speech and argumentation are simply or mutually incompatible. He points to Aristotle's distinction between a universal or logical whole, having logical parts, and a concrete whole, constituted by "the phenomenal sequences and co-existences, perceived by sense or imaged" (1.385). And he endorses Aristotle's gloss (in *Metaphysics* D 1025a8 and *NE* 4.1127b16) on the paradoxical conclusion of the *Hippias Minor* that, contrary to Sokrates' usual contention that virtue consists in knowledge, it is better to do injustice knowingly than to do justice ignorantly: Plato here uses the epithets *veracious* and *mendacious* "as designating one who *can* tell the truth if he chooses—one who *can* speak falsely if he chooses: and in this sense he argues plausibly that the two epithets go together, and that no man can be mendacious unless he be also veracious. [But] Aristotle points out that the epithets in their received meaning are applied, not to the power itself, but to the habitual

and intentional use of that power" (1.399). This is the first, but it will not be the last time that Grote shows Sokrates using a "sophistic" tactic, here playing on the ambiguous meaning of a word, in arguing against a "sophist."

Like the praise of the education of the Great King in the middle of the *Alcibiades I* (which Grote thinks would be more characteristic of Xenophon than of Plato), he argues that the unusual features of the *Hipparchus*, *Minos*, *Theages*, and *Rivals* (unnamed interlocutors and quasi-legendary historical characters in the first two dialogues, positive predictions concerning others coming attributed to Sokrates' daemon in the third) do not constitute adequate reasons to declare the dialogues spurious, especially in the face of their ancient acceptance. These features could be taken equally well as evidence of the fertility of Plato's imagination or literary experiments. Grote deems these dialogues inferior to Plato's best productions, but he observes that all four of these dialogues depict Sokrates asking his characteristic what is... 'x' questions about moral topics (greed, law, wisdom, and philosophy). None of them raises a question explicitly addressed in another dialogue; and, as in the other elenctic dialogues, Sokrates shows that the question cannot be answered on the basis of widely accepted opinions. Nor does Grote find any reason for the critical disparagement of the *Ion*, in which Sokrates criticizes the rhapsode's claim to have acquired the knowledge of a general or legislator from his study of Homer on basically the same grounds he criticizes Homer in Book 10 of the *Republic*.

Sokrates' critique of the study of Homer as a form of education apparently leads Grote to consider the *Laches* and *Charmides* next. Both dialogues raise the question of the meaning of one of the cardinal virtues; and in both dialogues Sokrates and his interlocutors fail to find an answer to their question or to identify an expert who can teach them. In both Sokrates proclaims his own ignorance and consequent inability to teach. Grote praises the dramatic details of both these dialogues for adding charm to the discussion of topics, especially moderation, that are not attractive in themselves. However, his refusal to recognize the significance of Plato's use of figures whose history was known to him and his readers prevents Grote from seeing that the defects of Nikias and Laches' respective understandings of courage led both generals to disastrous defeats on the battlefield. In other words, he does not see the way in which the relation between "theory" or opinion and practice is reflected in these dialogues in the relation between the drama and the arguments.<sup>13</sup> Likewise,

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13 Plato shows that there is a closer connection between clear thinking and action than Grote seems to contemplate. Nikias, who identifies courage with knowledge of what is truly terrible, failed to withdraw from Sicily because of an eclipse and warnings from

he seems to miss the irony of Plato's showing Sokrates discussing moderation with two of his relatives who later became members of "the thirty" and demonstrated little of that virtue in taking control of Athens.

Although Grote begins relegating his critiques of the commentators who have declared the dialogues in question to be spurious to appendices in his comments on the dialogues he takes up after the *Hippias Minor*, disputes about the authenticity of authorship continue to deflect his attention from the specific issues and arguments raised in the dialogues themselves. With regard to the *Lysis*, as with the *Laches* and *Charmides*, Grote simply points out that the question is not answered. He finds Aristotle's more direct treatment of courage, moderation, and friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* more satisfying, but insists that Aristotle's declarative answers presuppose the confusing attempts to resolve the issue by trial and error depicted by Plato.

Grote's discussion of the purely elenctic dialogues of search in Volume I concludes with the *Euthydemus*, which also provides a transition to his response to the critiques of the sophists and rhetoricians in the *Menon*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, and *Phaedrus* in Volume II. In the *Euthydemus*, Grote argues, Plato exhibits the differential results of two modes of questioning a young Athenian: the discouraging refutation of his opinions by the sophists and the encouragement to further learning offered by Sokrates. The contrast, Grote emphasizes, "does not consist" in Sokrates' contriving his questions "to bring out some established and positive conclusion." On the contrary, "professing earnest anxiety to stimulate Kleinias in the path of virtue, he is at the same time unable to define what the capital condition of virtue is." The real contrast between the competitors thus consists first in their pretension, and next in their methods. The sophists arrogantly claim to be able to teach virtue and demand a fee for doing it; Sokrates "disdains the fee, doubts whether such teaching is possible, and professes only to encourage . . . a willing pupil" (1.530–31).<sup>14</sup>

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some diviners. Laches, who defines courage as fortitude in the face of an enemy, failed to withstand pressure from his men to fight, because they interpreted his caution as cowardice. See *Plato's Philosophers*, 247–57.

- 14 As Grote astutely observes, "the presence, as well as the loud manifestations of an indiscriminate crowd in the Lykeium, are essential" to maintaining the light-hearted character of the exchange. In the *Parmenides* we see that in a serious discussion, "the public must be excluded, for they do not understand the purpose: and the student under examination must be one who is competent . . . as Sokrates is represented to be" (533). As Xenophon's account of Sokrates' cross-examination of a youth named Euthydemus in the *Memorabilia* (4:2, 5–8) shows, a young man could not endure to repeat the humiliation caused by the refutation of his opinions, if that refutation took place in public.

In fact, Grote argues, the historical Sokrates we see in other dialogues was more eristic than the sophists and left behind a greater number of active disciples. We know from the *Apology* that he understood his refuting the knowledge claims of others to be a divine mission imposed upon him by the Delphic oracle; and his pursuit of that vocation had made him unpopular. Both the gentle, encouraging Sokrates and the eristic sophists depicted in the *Euthydêmus* are characters drawn for the purposes of this particular exchange, “having the same dramatic reality as Sokrates and Strepsiades, or the Δίκαιος λόγος and Ἀδίκος λόγος, of Aristophanes, but no more” (1.536). As we are reminded by the epilogue of the *Euthydêmus* and see emphatically in the *Menon*, most Athenians could not see any difference between Sokrates and the sophists, and they objected to both on basically the same grounds.

Indeed, Grote argues, “the received supposition that there were at Athens a class of men called Sophists who made money and reputation by obvious fallacies employed to bring about contradictions . . . pervert[s] the representations given of ancient philosophy” (1.542). Any philosopher (including Plato and Aristotle) who puts forward arguments that can be shown to be false, can be accused of purveying the “pseudo-wisdom . . . declared by Sokrates to be the natural state of all mankind.” More generally, “no professional body of men ever acquired gain or celebrity by maintaining theses, and employing arguments, which everyone could easily detect as false. . . . The distinction between the paid and the gratuitous discourses is altogether unworthy to enter into the history of philosophy” (1.542–44). Since everyone reasons and most commit errors, Grote concludes, the true value of the *Euthydêmus* consists in the presentation of a series of logical fallacies that Aristotle then classified more systematically in *De Sophisticis Elenchis*.

### Why the Picture Plato Draws of Sokrates is more Important than the Arguments

In Volume II Grote considers the dialogues in which the question or questions raised remain unanswered, but Plato nevertheless attributes positive doctrines to one or more of the characters. The fact that Plato attributes invalid arguments and incompatible positions to Sokrates shows why the characterization of the man who cannot be deterred or diverted from his search for truth by fear of death or the pleasures of sex, food, and drink has always been more attractive to readers than the specific positions he takes.

The *Menon* is a dialogue of search inasmuch as the primary questions about the meaning of virtue and its teachability remain unanswered. But in



the course of the conversation, Sokrates introduces the "platonic" dogma concerning the immortality of the soul in the account of "recollection" he gives to explain the slave boy's ability to learn a geometric proof. Following this demonstration, Sokrates and Meno agree that virtue might also be teachable. But when they prove unable to identify a teacher, partly because Sokrates denies that the gentlemen of Athens can teach their sons, his future accuser Anytus warns Sokrates that he may be taken for a sophist.

As in the *Menon*, so in the *Protagoras* Sokrates concludes that neither he nor the most prominent sophist then in Athens has been able to say what virtue is or to show that it is teachable. This dialogue is thus also explicitly elenctic. However, Grote observes, speaking through the mouth of the sophist, Plato suggests not only that everyone needs to learn a modicum of the justice in order to form and maintain a political association to protect their lives and liberties, but also that all citizens thus try to teach everyone else the requisite virtue through their own practice as well as by precept. Since the speech is attributed to a sophist, many critics dismiss it; but Grote thinks "it one of the best parts of the Platonic writings. . . . In many of the Platonic dialogues, Sokrates is made to dwell upon the fact that there are no recognized professional teachers of virtue; and to ground upon this fact a doubt, whether virtue be really teachable." The *Protagoras* is the only dialogue "in which the fact is accounted for, and the doubt formally answered" by the observation that there are not special teachers, because "every man must of necessity be a practitioner," so that every man is constantly both teacher and learner (2.46).

As in the *Euthydemus*, so in the *Protagoras*, Grote argues, Plato contrasts two different modes of arguing. But in the *Protagoras*, he indicates that both forms of argument have their uses. In the long speeches in which he is acknowledged to be superior, the sophist begins with general opinion and argues from it; what he knows and can teach others is how to speak in public. As Sokrates' interlocutors in the *Gorgias* emphasize, men who wish to be active in politics need to acquire such rhetorical skill. In his demand that they proceed by short speeches or question and answer, Sokrates represents the power of dialectic; and in the *Protagoras* he uses his analytical skills to show, contrary to most human beings who distinguish good from bad pleasures, "that pain or suffering is the End to be avoided or lessened as far as possible—and pleasure or happiness the End to be pursued as far as attainable—by intelligent forethought and comparison" (2.81–82). The friend of utilitarians such as Mill and Bentham finds this argument to be true, but incomplete, because it considers only the happiness of the individual. It neglects the necessity of taking into account the needs of others, or justice, that Sokrates brings to the fore in other dialogues like the *Republic*, and that Protagoras emphasized at the beginning of this one.



As in the *Protagoras*, so in the *Gorgias*, Grote maintains, all four of the major interlocutors—Gorgias, Polus, Callicles, and Sokrates—speak for Plato, because they are all equally his creations. We cannot follow the practice of many commentators and take Sokrates simply as Plato's spokesman, because in the *Gorgias* Sokrates gives arguments and takes positions that contradict what he says in other dialogues. For example, in refuting Polus's claim that everyone would choose to be a tyrant, Sokrates readily states a definition of the noble, even though he claimed that he could not provide such in the *Hippias Major*. Likewise, in refuting Kallicles' contention that it is just by nature for the strong to rule, Sokrates distinguishes the pleasant from the good, even though he had argued in the *Protagoras* that happiness or the good for human beings is found through a correct calculation of what minimizes their pain and maximizes their pleasure.

Having devoted much of his own life both to practical politics and the study of philosophy, Grote finds Kallikles' suggestion that philosophy constitutes a good preparation for politics much more sensible than Sokrates' insistence on their complete separation. In the *Gorgias*, he suggests, Plato wanted to dramatize the antithesis between philosophy and rhetoric. So he put a weak defense of the latter in the mouth of Gorgias. Acknowledged to be an expert public speaker and democratic statesman, Perikles would never have claimed to be able to persuade ignorant people to do what he wanted. As Thucydides shows, he had to contend with the opposition of others. Neither he "nor any defender of free speech would assent to [Sokrates'] definition of rhetoric . . . as a branch of the art of flattery" (2.146–47). Moreover, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato has Sokrates suggest that Perikles' studies with the philosopher Anaxagoras helped him become a better speaker.

Because Plato does not give a precise definition of the "Good" he opposes to pleasure in the *Gorgias*, Grote concludes that the logic of the dialogue is not on a par with its eloquence. Nevertheless, he emphasizes, "nowhere in ancient literature is the title, position, and dignity of individual dissenting opinion, ethical and political—against established ethical and political orthodoxy—so clearly marked out and so boldly asserted" (2.151) as by Sokrates in this dialogue.

Conceding that the *Phaedon* "is among the most affirmative and expository in the Platonic list" (2.152), Grote observes that no one later accepted the validity of either the "proofs" of the immortality of the soul or the "hypothesis" concerning the ideas that Plato put into Sokrates' mouth. What later readers have found impressive is the depiction of Sokrates' steadfast commitment to philosophy in the face of death. He implores his companions to continue

seeking the truth both before and after his death by questioning his arguments and opinions as well as those of others.

"The natural counterpart and antithesis to the *Phaedon*, is found in the *Symposion*," Grote comments. In both dialogues, "the personality of Sokrates stands out with peculiar force: in the one, he is in the fullness of life and enjoyment, along with festive comrades—in the other, he is on the verge of approaching death, surrounded by companions in deep affliction." Both dialogues thus dramatize the social aspect of Sokratic philosophizing. However, "the point common to both, is, the perfect self-command of Sokrates under a diversity of trying circumstances. In the *Symposion*, we read of him as triumphing over heat, cold, fatigue, danger, amorous temptation, unmeasured potations of wine, etc.: in the *Phaedon*, we discover him rising superior to the fear of death." In both dialogues "his resolute volition is occasionally overpowered by fits of absorbing meditation," and we see "a streak of eccentricity in his character, which belongs to what Plato calls the philosophical inspiration and madness, rising above the measure of human temperance and prudence." In the *Phaedon* Plato thus "depicts in Sokrates the same intense love of philosophy and dialectic debate, as [in] the *Symposion* and *Phaedrus*: but [he] makes no allusion to that personal attachment, and passionate admiration of youthful beauty, with which, according to those two dialogues, the mental fermentation of the philosophical aspirant is asserted to begin" (2.158).

Continuing to point out discrepancies in the doctrines attributed to Sokrates, Grote also notes that his emphasis on the non-composite character of an immortal soul in the *Phaedon* is incompatible with the analysis of the tri-partite soul in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*. And, although the *Symposion* and *Phaedrus* are the only dialogues to emphasize the erotic, they differ greatly in the way that passion is treated.<sup>15</sup> Like the attributions of the "theory of the ideas" and arguments concerning the immortality of soul to Sokrates in

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15 Grote lists the differences: 1) "In the *Phaedrus* and *Phaedon* (also in the *Timaeus* and elsewhere), the pre-existence of the soul, and its antecedent familiarity . . . with the world of Ideas,—are brought into the foreground. . . . But in the *Symposion*, no such doctrine is found." 2) "In the *Phaedrus* and *Phaedon*, the soul is declared to be immortal. . . . But in the *Symposion*, this is affirmed to be impossible. The soul yearns for, but is forbidden to reach immortality." 3) "In the *Phaedrus*, *Phaedon*, *Republic*, and elsewhere, Plato recognizes many distinct Forms or Ideas . . . among which Beauty is one. . . . But in the *Symposion*, the Form of Beauty is presented singly and exclusively." 4) "The *Phaedrus* and *Symposion* have, both . . . the theory of Eros as the indispensable, initiatory, stimulus to philosophy. . . . But if we look to the *Phaedon*, *Theaetêtus*, *Sophistês*, or *Republic*, we shall not find Eros invoked for any such function" (2:222–24).

the *Phaedon*, Grote considers the emphasis on the erotic character of philosophy in these dialogues to belong “especially to Plato, who combined erotic and poetical imagination with Sokratic dialectics and generalizing theory” (2.209).<sup>16</sup>

In light of the unpersuasive and inconsistent substantive arguments Plato attributes to Sokrates Grote takes the *Parmenides* and *Theaetêtus* to represent true depictions of the Sokratic mode of philosophizing, even though, contrary to Aristotle’s dictum about Sokrates in the *Metaphysics* (987b1–10), the questions raised in these dialogues do not concern moral phenomena. The *Parmenides* is the only dialogue, Grote emphasizes, in which Plato depicts a young, to be sure, Sokrates subjected to the kind of interrogation and cross-examination of his opinions to which he usually subjected others. Just as Sokrates’ interrogations of others are designed to show them the need for further investigation of the subject, so the elderly Eleatic concludes by urging Sokrates to continue his philosophical investigations. More significant, in exchanges with a young man named Aristotle, *Parmenides* demonstrates the way in which Sokrates should practice philosophical argumentation, by examining first the meaning of the proposition in question and the grounds for affirming its truth and, then, its negation. *Parmenides* uses his own proposition that “one is” as an example; but, like Sokratic elenctic exchanges, the cross-examination has no definite outcome.

In the *Theaetêtus* Sokrates famously presents himself as an intellectual midwife, who has no ideas or teachings of his own that he wishes to propagate. His questions bring out and test the opinions of the talented young mathematician with regard to the meaning of knowledge; Sokrates does not proffer any of his own. At the end of the dialogue Sokrates nevertheless claims that he has benefited *Theaetêtus* by curing him of the greatest form of ignorance, thinking that one knows what one does not, and so preparing him, perhaps, to give birth to better notions.

Grote nevertheless objects strongly to the reasoning on the basis of which Sokrates claims to have proved the invalidity of the Protagorean saying that “man is the measure.” It is only by leaving off the implied qualification—that each individual thinks what he sees to be true is true—that Sokrates is able to argue a) that Protagoras’s dictum means that there is no truth, but only individual opinions, and b) that no one can judge any one of these opinions to be superior to any other. The modern empiricist Grote affirms that all knowledge arises from the conjunction of a subject’s perception with its object; but

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16 “The second discourse of Sokrates [in the *Phaedrus*], far from being Sokratic in tenor, is the most exuberant effusion of mingled philosophy, poetry, and mystic theology, that ever emanated from Plato” (2:245).

this does not mean that all individual perceptions are equally true. It means simply that each sees and can only see or perceive what he or she perceives; the need for each individual to think matters out for him or herself is, indeed, at the bottom of Sokratic dialectics. We do not and cannot know whether Protagoras ever made the arguments Sokrates attributes to him; Grote thinks not. But, he observes, both Protagoras and Sokrates think that individuals can change their minds. He admits that, as a rhetorician, Protagoras would appeal to the emotions and common sentiments of his audience, whereas Sokrates demands logical consistency in his individual interlocutors. What Grote does not see so clearly is that it is the status of the "objective" mathematical measures he himself observes are used to judge various sensations that is at issue: are they purely intelligible, as Sokrates argues here and elsewhere, or are they derived from sensible experience as Theaetêtus and Grote seem to think?<sup>17</sup>

Grote emphasizes that neither the defects of the three definitions of knowledge offered nor the critiques of them in the *Theaetêtus* are explicitly addressed or remedied, as many commentators seem to think, in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* that follow the *Theaetêtus* dramatically. Sokrates falls silent in these dialogues, Grote observes, and the Eleatic Stranger who replaces him does not cross-examine the opinions of his interlocutors so much as present a lecture in the form of question and answer. No one fits the final definition of a sophist to which they come better than Sokrates, Grote points out. He objects, moreover, to the Eleatic's attempt to solve the paradoxes that result from the Parmenidean dictum that it is impossible to think or say what is not and to show how false opinion is, therefore, possible by distinguishing differentiation from negation, because the replacement of negation by differentiation destroys the mutual incompatibility of the is and is not essential to the principle of contradiction and thus to all logic. Because he sees Sokrates and Plato seeking for an expert who knows what people should do in so many dialogues,

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17 Grote acknowledges that people still argue both sides of this issue. And they continue to do so. See James Robert Brown, *Platonism, Naturalism, and Mathematical Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2011.) What Grote does not see is that Sokrates is showing, in effect, that neither of the geometers has thought about the basis and character of his own art (or knowledge). See *Plato's Philosophers*, 613–39. Nor does Grote observe the discrepancy between Sokrates' description of philosophers in the so-called "digression," uninterested in the people around them and ignorant of what to say or do in court, and Plato's depiction of Sokrates, who claims in his *Apology* not to know how to speak in court, but gives a speech that follows rhetorical form, and who was certainly interested in the individuals, especially the young men and other intellectuals, he encountered in Athens. See Paul Stern, "The Philosophic Importance of the Political Life: On the Digression in Plato's *Theaetetus*," *American Political Science Review* 96, No. 2 (June 2002): 275–89.

Grote does not notice the differences between the philosopher-kings Sokrates calls for in the *Republic* and the “statesman” described in the dialogue by that name. Instead, Grote emphasizes the Eleatic’s statement that they are seeking a definition of the statesman, not so that the young Sokrates can become one, but as a means of his learning dialectics.

In the concluding chapters of Volume II, Grote presents the *Kratylus* and *Philebus*, as he had the *Parmenides*, *Theaetêtus*, *Sophistês*, and *Statesman*, as contributing primarily to Plato’s readers’ understanding of good philosophical method. In the *Kratylus* he notes, Sokrates first responds to Hermogenes’ declaration that all names are conventional by suggesting that a true legislator of names would apply them on the basis of his or her knowledge of what the beings truly are. In that case, a name might, as Kratylus initially affirms, reveal the truth about the being. But Sokrates and his interlocutor are again unable to identify such an expert, and the names given to things prove to be conventions based on an understanding of all things as being in flux and so essentially indistinguishable from one another. That conclusion proving to be unsatisfactory, Hermogenes and Kratylus go off together in search of knowledge of the things or ideas.

Asking whether the good is more like the pleasant than like knowledge, Grote observes, in the *Philêbus* Sokrates proposes a better way of defining things: first, by specifying all the different articulations of a general type, as sound is differentiated in music and language, and then in the case of things that come into being, defining them as mixtures of the indefinite and definite effected by a higher cause. As in the *Gorgias*, so, Grote outs, Sokrates’ distinguishing the pleasant from the good in the *Philebus* contradicts what the philosopher says in the *Protagoras*. But in the *Philêbus* Sokrates is willing to grant the rhetorician’s claim about the supremacy of his art that he had emphatically repudiated in the *Gorgias*. Grote concludes that “the comparison . . . is one among many proofs of the different points of view with which Plato, in his different dialogues, handled the same topics of ethical and psychological discussion” (2.620).

### Plato’s Dogmatic Philosophy and Dictatorial Politics

In his third volume Grote summarizes and criticizes the arguments to be found in the dialogues in which Plato either attributes a positive teaching to Sokrates or puts forward one of his own in the name of another philosopher. He then contrasts the Socratic dialogues written by Plato with those composed by the philosopher’s “other companions.”

Although he showed Sokrates criticizing rhetoricians in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, Grote notes, in the *Menexenus* Plato has Sokrates deliver a funeral oration. He does so, Grote speculates, in order to show that he could write a better speech than Lysias, if he chose to do so. The speech supposedly composed by Aspasia is a very fine one, although Grote thinks it is inferior to its Periklean model.

Plato left the *Kleitophon* an unfinished fragment, Grote speculates, because he realized that neither he nor Sokrates could answer the charges the young man leveled against the philosopher. Sokrates exhorted young men to seek to become virtuous, but when they asked what virtue is and how they could acquire it, he could not tell them. "This is precisely the description which Sokrates gives of his own efficiency, in the Platonic Apology" (3.21).

The *Republic* might appear to constitute an answer to the questions raised in the *Kleitophon*, because in it Sokrates explains what he means by justice. But, Grote objects, although the exposition is delivered in the form of question and answer, no serious objections are raised to what Sokrates suggests. In the course of the dialogue Sokrates introduces major terms and concepts—the virtues of courage, moderation, and wisdom as well as the "ideas"—that are questioned without resolution in other dialogues.

Although he contends that Plato fails to provide a satisfactory answer to either of the major issues he addresses in the *Republic*—whether the just life is the best life for a human being or the constitution of a just city—Grote nevertheless considers it "undoubtedly the grandest of all his compositions; including in itself all his different points of excellence." The first book represents "a subtle specimen of negative Dialectic"; and in the second book "we find two examples of continuous or Ciceronian pleading (like that ascribed to Protagoras)." These speeches are followed by "Plato's most sublime effort of constructive ingenuity, in putting together both the individual man and the collective City: together with more information . . . about his Dialectic or Philosophy, than any other dialogue furnishes." And the dialogue concludes "with a highly poetical myth" containing "the outline of cosmical agencies afterwards developed, though with many differences, in the *Timaeus*." Indeed, Grote concludes, "the brilliancy of the *Republic* will appear all the more conspicuous, when we . . . compare it with Plato's two posterior compositions: with the Pythagorean mysticism and theology of the *Timaeus*—or with the severe and dictatorial solemnity of the *Treatise De Legibus*" (3.122). He thus devotes more of his text—three full chapters—to the *Republic* than to any other dialogue.

Most commentators take the *Republic* to be a description of Plato's model city. Grote observes that "the avowed purpose of the treatise is, not to depict

the ideal of a commonwealth, but to solve the questions, What is Justice? What is Injustice? Does Justice, in itself and by its own intrinsic working, make the just man happy, apart from all consequences" (3.123). Sokrates seeks to answer the first two questions by constructing a city, but the definition of justice to which he comes contradicts the reason he gives for the formation of cities. Cities are formed, according to Sokrates, because no individual human being is self-sufficient. But the city he constructs is supposed to be self-sufficient. Sokrates does not inquire about the justice of its relations with others. Thus the definition of justice as the right ordering of the three parts of the soul to which Sokrates comes on the basis of the parallel he draws between the city and the individual applies only to an individual (and, one might note, although Grote does not, only to that individual's soul). It does not concern his relation with others except to turn his or her attention to his or her own job. Justice so understood is realized, moreover, only in a philosopher. Plato formulates this definition of justice solely in terms of what is good for the individual, because he sees that the conventional view articulated in the dialogue by his brothers could lead ambitious youths to conclude that it is good to be reputed to be just, but that it would be best to be a tyrant able to do whatever he desires. As Aristotle points out, however, justice applies to the reciprocal relations individual human beings necessarily have with others. Moreover, Grote emphasizes, Sokrates' concluding assertion that a just man will be happy, not only because his soul will be correctly ordered, but also because he will be respected and honored by others, does not explain or account for Sokrates' own treatment by his fellow Athenians.

Acknowledging that the "picture of a Commonwealth is unquestionably one of the main purposes" of the *Republic*, and that it serves as a transition to the *Timaeus* and *Kritias*, Grote comments on "the political provisions of the Platonic Commonwealth" as well (3.160). First and foremost, he emphasizes, Plato merely presents a sketch of his city. Readers learn virtually nothing about the lives of the multitude of producers. Everything rests on the education of the elite soldiers and philosopher-rulers. Modern readers tend to be skeptical about both the desirability and the need for such extensive public supervision; but, Grote observes, ancient Greek readers would be persuaded by the example of Lycurgus in Sparta. Since citizens of ancient Greek cities were expected to perform military service, they would have found Plato's recommendation of a special education for soldiers stranger and more questionable. In partial disagreement with Aristotle, Grote endorses the primary goal of Plato's city—to prevent rulers from developing and acting on private interests, which inevitably corrupt the performance of public duties—even though he considers it an "ideal" that is impossible to achieve. He thinks that Plato would



respond to Aristotle's objection that the communistic institutions he proposes would weaken the affective ties human beings feel to what is their own by stating that this is exactly what he is trying to do. Grote also criticizes the objection to educating males and females on the grounds that it is "unnatural" by observing that "the sentiment of obligation, or right and wrong, respecting the relations of the sexes, is everywhere very strong; but it does not everywhere attach to the same acts or objects" (3.222). In large parts of the Orient it is considered sacrilegious for a woman to show her face, but in Sparta young women had engaged in gymnastic exercises in conjunction with the young men. Indeed, he suggests, the disagreement between Plato and Aristotle about the nature and function of the two sexes "shows how little stress can be laid on arguments based on the word *Nature*." Each philosopher uses it to denote "the rule which he himself approves" (3.223). Plato's commonwealth was not, and could not be established, not because it was contrary to nature (as the Spartan precedent suggested). It would have required exceptional circumstances and great force to institute it (or Aristotle's best regime, for that matter), because the proposed reforms departed so greatly from the customs and conventions of the time and place.

Sokrates speaks only in the brief exchanges introducing the lengthy discourses by Timaeus and Kritias in the dialogues bearing their names, and he is not present in the *Leges* at all. Grote treats the *Timaeus*, *Kritias*, and *Leges*, therefore, as expository "dialogues" in which Plato sets forth his own opinions. "The Xenophontic Sokrates . . . disapproved all speculation respecting the origin and structure of the Kosmos. . . . The Platonic Timaeus is positively anti-Socratic. It places us at the opposite or dogmatic pole of Plato's character" (3.246–47).

As in the *Republic*, so in the *Timaeus*, Plato presents some very unorthodox theological opinions which would have justified the Athenians in charging him, as they had his teacher, for not believing in the gods of the city, if Plato had put these arguments forward in his own name. The *Timaeus* is interesting to modern readers in a way it was not to Plato's contemporaries, Grote suggests, because it is the only sketch of a complete system of universal philosophy in the words of its author that has come down to us from ancient Greece. "Though the idea of a pre-kosmic Demiurgus found little favour among the Grecian schools of philosophy, before the Christian era," he observes, "it was greatly welcomed among the Hellenising Jews at Alexandria. . . . The marked distinction drawn by Plato between the Demiurgus, and the constructed or generated Kosmos, with its in-dwelling Gods—provided a suitable place for the Supreme God of the Jews, degrading the Pagan Gods in comparison." Thus "the Platonic Timaeus became the medium of transition, from the Polytheistic

theology which served as philosophy among the early ages of Greece, to the omnipotent Monotheism to which philosophy became subordinated after the Christian era" (3.284–85). In sum, Grote considers the *Timaeus* to be of historical and theological, but not philosophical interest. And the *Kritias*, which explicitly follows it, is obviously only a fragment.

We know from Aristotle that the *Leges* was composed after the *Republic*. Scholars have written much about the differences, but, Grote points out, the most important of those differences is the relative absence of philosophy in the *Leges*. "The Sokratic Elenchus . . . is not merely not commended, but . . . is even proscribed and denounced by implication, since free speech and criticism generally is barred out [sic] by the rigorous Platonic censorship. . . . The ethical sentiment . . . with its terms designating the varieties of virtue, is much the same as in other Platonic compositions: the political and social doctrine also, though different in some material points, it yet very analogous on several others" (3.304). Grote thinks the demotion of philosophy may reflect Plato's disillusionment as a result of his experience in Syracuse. He sees a connection between the absence of Sokratic philosophy and the character of the elderly Dorian interlocutors; as in the *Republic* with regard to dialectics, so in the *Leges*, he notes, the prohibition of participation of the young in a critical examination of the laws flies in the face of Sokrates' own practice, as depicted in Plato's other dialogues. Grote approves the end or purpose of the communities Plato describes in both the *Republic* and the *Leges* as making all citizens virtuous servants of the common good; but Grote abhors the censorship, especially the enforcement of a law concerning beliefs about the gods that would make it impossible for Sokrates to have survived in either city.

Rather than reflecting on the trajectory of Plato's writings, which Grote presents more as a classification than a development, he concludes by implicitly contrasting Plato's dialogues with the teachings and writings of Sokrates' other companions. He seeks, first and foremost, to show that Sokrates did not establish a school or propagate a doctrine.

Plato was by no means the only ancient author to compose Sokratic dialogues, Grote emphasizes. All the principal companions of Sokrates wrote such dialogues, and these dialogues all show Sokrates "professing his ignorance and humiliating insolent men like Alkibiades with his cross-examinations"; they also extol "the Daemon or divining prophecy of their master" (3.469). The substantive lessons Sokrates' companions drew from their personal association with him differed markedly, however. Both Eukleides, the founder of the Megarian school, and Phaedon, founder of the Eleian or Eretrian school,

"turned their speculative activity altogether in the logical or intellectual direction." Antisthenes and Aristippus, on the other hand, concentrated on the ethical questions raised by Sokrates' concern for the good; their arguments formed the basis of the two most widely extended ethical sects in the later pagan world: Stoicism and Epicureanism. Both saw Sokrates embodying a certain way of life, but they formulated opposing views of what that was. Antisthenes provided the basis for Stoicism by declaring virtue to be the end of human existence; it alone sufficed for conferring happiness. This virtue had to be manifested in acts and character, however not merely in words. So understood, it did not require much discourse or much learning—only the bodily strength or indifference to both pleasure and pain exemplified by Sokrates. And, contrary to what we hear in several Platonic dialogues, it could be taught. Aristippus also understood Sokrates to prescribe a certain way of life, but that was to obtain as much pleasure as one could, consistent with ease, or without difficulty and danger. Like Antisthenes and Diogenes, Aristippus thus refused to take an active role in political life. Like Protagoras and in marked contrast to Plato, he discounted the value of geometry and astronomy, because these studies do not address the question of what is truly good and beautiful. Like the sophists, Aristippus also demanded pay for his lessons.

The lessons the founders of the Megarian, Eleian, Cynic, and Kyrenaic sects derived from their association with Sokrates, about which we know only from the writings of others, thus contrast as much with "the Sokratic conversations related by Xenophon," as they do with the Platonic dialogues. Grote thinks that Xenophon reports mainly "what Sokrates actually said." But, he nevertheless observes that though Xenophon depicts the "theorizing negative vein, the cross-examining Elenchus of Sokrates—it is the preceptorial vein which he appropriates to himself and expands in its bearing on practical conduct" (3.562). Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, *Oekonomikus*, and *Symposium* are "intended to vindicate Sokrates against charges of impiety and of corrupting youthful minds, and to show that he inculcated, before everything, self-denial, moderation of desires, reverence for parents, and worship of the Gods" (3.569). But Sokrates is not Xenophon's hero; Xenophon's notion of human excellence is embodied in Cyrus—a military general and political leader who knows how to obtain the willing consent and cooperation of others, but does not acquire his extraordinary abilities from any kind of instruction—surely not, like the kings of the *Republic*, in philosophy. And "the scheme of government which Xenophon imagines, and introduces him as organizing, is neither Sokratic nor Platonic, nor even Hellenic. . . . It is altogether an Oriental despotism" (3.591).

## Conclusion

Grote's relatively dismissive treatment of the "semi-philosophising general" (3.562) at the conclusion of *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates* serves to remind readers of the peculiar character of his study. Xenophon provides us with most of our information about the "real" or "historical" Sokrates, according to Grote, but Grote specifically says that he is not writing a history. As he states in the Preface, he wrote this account of Plato and the other companions of Sokrates as a supplement to his *History of Greece* in order to be fair to Plato. Sokrates inspired many admirers to write dialogues, but Grote considers Plato's to be the best—the richest, most varied and charming, having the greatest philosophical breadth and depth. Grote highlights Plato's Socratic dialogues, because the Sokrates Grote admires is the man depicted in Plato's *Apology*. Grote thinks that depiction has an historical basis, but he would accept its validity even if it were shown simply to be Plato's account of what Sokrates ought to have said.

Grote judges what is good and important in Plato's dialogues on the basis of an explicitly modern understanding of philosophy and politics he takes from the two Mills and Bentham. He valorizes Sokrates' negative, critical cross-examinations of the opinions of his interlocutors, because they represent the first necessary step in a philosophical investigation, according to both Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Insisting that all the characters in the dialogues are equally Plato's creations, and so speak equally for him, Grote also approves of the sophists and rhetoricians who teach others how to speak and so participate actively in politics. Firmly committed to the advantages of a liberal democratic polity, he disapproves strongly of the censorship Plato would impose. He is, in other words, a Whig historian who explicitly believes in progress. Because he thinks that modern philosophy is better than its ancient roots or foundations, he does not think that he or his readers can learn anything from Plato that they could not learn from modern sources. Finding no evidence for a historical or developmental explanation of the differences in the arguments and positions enunciated in the dialogues, even by the character named Sokrates, Grote takes an explicitly "unsystematic" approach. He does not ask why Plato decided to put this specific argument in the mouth of this specific character under these specific circumstances or why he treats a similar problem, e.g., the question of whether virtue is teachable, differently in different dialogues. Noting that Plato never says anything in his own name, Grote does not make any systematic attempt to discover what Plato thought by examining the character and construction of his work as a whole. Grote merely reports what Plato

wrote (or, more precisely, what his various characters said and argued) and comments on it. He refuses even to try to show how the dialogues fit together; he simply takes them up, one after another, more or less according to his own understanding of what remains valid in them and what should be discarded. Scholars may still find his comments on individual dialogues insightful and useful. His explicitly "unsystematic" general approach is, however, fundamentally no more philosophical than it is historical. As he himself declares, the order in which he presents the dialogues and, we might add, his account of Plato's work as a whole is "unsatisfying."

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## The Sophists in Context: George Grote's Reappraisal

*Giovanni Giorgini*

### Enter the Sophists

The sophists had a bad press from a very early stage on. When they first appeared on the scene at Athens (and in other important cities in mainland Greece and in Sicily), around the middle of the fifth century BCE, they presented themselves as masters of language and teachers of the art of persuasion and public speaking: George Grote himself already noticed that they thus filled a vacuum in “higher education” in the city as well as answer a request for experts able to teach affluent citizens how to be effective with speech in politics and in court: Athenian democracy had been since its inception a “government through speech”; and “equal possibility to speak” (*isegoria*) as well as the “possibility to speak up one’s mind” (*parrhesia*) had been two of its main ideological pillars, two catchwords almost synonymous of democracy. Other factors made ability to speak publicly a recommendable skill: a lawsuit was not an unlikely event in the life of an ordinary Athenian so it was prudent to be well prepared for the occasion; in democratic regimes trials were very frequent and citizens had to appear in court personally and therefore needed some ability to speak persuasively and argue effectively. With his amazing historical knowledge and sensibility Grote also noticed that after the Ionic revolt (500 BCE) and the Persian invasions of Greece (490–479) the relations between Greek cities became more frequent and more complicated and required more talent, and especially rhetorical skills, in the politicians who managed them.<sup>1</sup> Training in speech then became as essential as training in arms for a Greek citizen and the sophists asserted to be able to provide exactly such an education.

Although they evidently performed a useful service, the sophists acquired a bad reputation in a very short time: as early as 423 BCE, when Aristophanes’ *Clouds* was performed, the playwright could count on the fact that the public would understand his mocking picture of Socrates as a sophist because they could recognize a sophist when they encountered one. A number of factors contributed to this undeserved bad repute: social envy, for the sophists taught

1 George Grote, *A History of Greece* [1846–56] 12 vols. (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1899; reprinted from the second London edition of 1888 by J. Murray), vol. 7, chapter 67, 338.



for money and therefore only rich people could afford to pay for their services; conservative attitude, for they employed their verbal skills to examine, if not question, the traditional beliefs of their contemporaries; political enmity, for many of them were attracted to Athens by Pericles' patronage and democratic freedom and were therefore held in suspicion, or plainly hated, by political opponents;<sup>2</sup> intellectual rivalry, as in the case of Plato, Aristotle and Isocrates, who for different reasons despised their teaching because had different intellectual and educational programmes. Plato, in particular, was keen to emphasize the difference between his former teacher, Socrates, and the sophists who, in his opinion, were pursuing two completely different line of activity: while Socrates used dialogue and dialectics to search for the truth about the most important matters in the belief that this pursuit could be done only "chorally," the sophists used discourses and linguistic tricks in order to win the argument and increase their prestige (and consequent honorarium).<sup>3</sup> If we add to this that what we know about the sophists has arrived down to us mostly from their critics whilst only fragments survive of their original works, it is not difficult to realize why it is still difficult to dispel the accusation of "sophistry" levelled at them.

### The Image of the Sophists in England before Grote

With rash conciseness we may say that two main factors contributed to preventing a fair evaluation of the sophists and of their contribution to the history of philosophy: Plato's judgement, inspired by his desire to differentiate them from Socrates and from his own intellectual activity; and their association with Athenian democracy, which prompted authors of anti-democratic leaning to regard them as a product as well as an effect of the "spirit of democracy." In the most authoritative history of Greek philosophy of the nineteenth century, Eduard Zeller's *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtliche Entwicklung*

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2 This also explains the number of trials which involved sophists and other intellectuals and artists who belonged to the circle of Pericles: these were political trials which aimed at sapping Pericles' hegemonic position in Athens by touching people around him when they could not get him.

3 This is evident in most Platonic dialogues, especially the *Gorgias*. Plato was aware that the two figures, the philosopher/dialectician and the sophist/rhetorician, were not easily distinguishable; however, just like the dog and the wolf, they looked similar but had in fact completely different natures: see his *Sophist* and the exercise of the "art of division" (*diairesis*) to arrive at a theoretical definition of the two figures.

(1844–52), the sophists were still depicted as shallow thinkers who upheld relativism in morality as well as in the theory of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Zeller's interpretation was strongly influenced by Hegel's vision of the development of philosophy. Hegel had the merit to attribute an important role to the sophists, considered, together with Socrates, as a moment of subjective "antithesis" to the "objective" moment represented by the Ionians: they were thus reinstated in the history of philosophy albeit with a negative role.<sup>5</sup> In England the situation was not much better: the philosopher F.D. Maurice, author of an influential history of philosophy, held a very negative view of Athenian democracy and gave a very critical account of the sophists in his work.<sup>6</sup> As for the historians, they typically associated the sophists with the "commercial spirit" of democracy: they loved luxury and extravagance; they asked for payment for their teaching and bent their theories to please the hearers; they indulged in all sorts of material pleasures. It is significant in this respect, as Karen Whedbee has persuasively argued, that "historians of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made no pretence about their own objectivity. They engaged the history of Greece as an instrument for reinforcing enduring lessons about political and moral principles."<sup>7</sup> The role of the demagogues in manipulating popular opinion, the institution of ostracism in order to curb the best and most eminent citizens, the influence of the sophists in corrupting the young were typical topics in the indictment of Athenian democracy. It comes as no surprise, then, that the sophists offered to these historians an illustration of the dangers of populism and malicious intellectual inquiry. The most influential *History of Greece* of the late eighteenth century was undoubtedly that of William Mitford, published in 1784 and reprinted many times in the next

4 Eduard Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtliche Entwicklung* (Tübingen: Fues, 1844–52); the book was translated in many languages, including English: *A History of Greek Philosophy*, trans. S.F. Alleyne, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1881).

5 G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (1840) (Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), vol. 1, 352–72. On Hegel's reception of the sophists see John Poulakos, *Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995).

6 Frederick Denison Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy. Ancient Philosophy* (1840) (London-Glasgow: Griffin & Co., 1854). This essay was part of the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* devised by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Nadia Urbinati comments that "for Maurice, Athenian democracy was corrupt and intolerant because it was based on doxa and exalted the *vita activa*": *Mill on Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

7 Karen E. Whedbee, "Making the Worse Case Appear the Better: British Reception of the Greek Sophists prior to 1850," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 4 (2008): 603–30; see also her very interesting "Reclaiming Rhetorical Democracy: George Grote's Defense of Cleon and the Athenian Demagogues," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34, no. 4, (2004): 71–95.

half century.<sup>8</sup> Mitford was a rabid anti-Jacobin and Tory, who had been especially impressed by the Athenian democracy's failure to protect individual rights, notably of the richest and most eminent citizens. In his description, the Athenian government had already become "a tyranny in the hands of the people" by the time of Solon; as for the sophists, they had been instrumental in debasing the morality of young Athenians through their moral relativism and by their ability to "make the worse appear the better cause." Mitford's anti-democratic bias was so obvious that it may seem strange today that his account of classical Greece was so popular. But, as Whedbee notices, "Mitford's description of the sophists was influential precisely because it reflected the political and intellectual orthodoxies of his age."<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that even James Mill, who rejected the view of Athenian democracy depicted by conservative historians such as Mitford and who sharply criticised the neo-Platonic reading of Plato propounded by Thomas Taylor "The Platonist," considered the sophists shallow thinkers who "filled the minds of the youth with a spirit of mere logomachy."<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, it was typical in the literature of the age to contrast Socrates' pursuit of truth in morality with the sophists' ability to teach whatever value was most expedient, in a battle of the "just" against the "useful"; conversely, Socrates and Plato were compared to Christianity and often considered its forerunners if not pre-Christian saints altogether.<sup>11</sup>

In the early nineteenth century a few voices of dissent started to be heard and the stature of the sophists' intellectual accomplishment and the quality of their morality were re-evaluated and sometimes even commended. An important figure in questioning the received view of the sophists was the Whig historian and politician Thomas Babington Macaulay,<sup>12</sup> who published a very detailed and critical review of Mitford's *History* in the *Knight's Quarterly*,

8 William Mitford, *The History of Greece*, 8 vols. (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1784–1810). See the very critical review by George Grote, "Institutions of Ancient Greece," *Westminster Review* 5 (1826): 269–331.

9 Whedbee, "British Reception of the Greek Sophists prior to 1850," 607.

10 James Mill, "Taylor's Plato," *Edinburgh Review* 14 (1809): 199. Antis Loizides argues for a more nuanced appreciation of James Mill's position on the sophists, for in an early entry of his *Commonplace Books* (1804) he described them as "ordinary philosophers" who taught appropriate virtues to their audience: see Antis Loizides, *John Stuart Mill's Platonic Heritage* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 57 fn 16.

11 Loizides, *Mill's Platonic Heritage*, 29–37.

12 T.B. Macaulay's contributions to *Knight's Quarterly* magazine are reprinted in *The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay* 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860).

with the explicit intent to “reduce an overpraised writer to his proper level.”<sup>13</sup> Macaulay connected his rehabilitation of the sophists with a reassessment of the experience of Athenian democracy, which he considered a successful experiment: democratic government was suited to the Athenian people;<sup>14</sup> its commercial inclination produced economic wealth which, in turn, provided leisure to the citizens who could devote time to art and philosophy. Another important contribution to this reappraisal was given by the eccentric and eclectic intellectual G.H. Lewes, the author of a *Biographical History of Philosophy* (1845) where the sophists were the subject of a thorough rehabilitation: Lewes questioned the authority of Plato, a biased witness in his opinion, and advocated a re-reading of the sophists against the Platonic tradition of condemnation; he argued that the sophists, especially Protagoras, were practically-minded people who exhibited good sense and trained young Athenians how to attain effective practical results.<sup>15</sup> Finally, Grote himself had contributed to an early reassessment of the sophists in his critical review of Mitford's *History* published in the *Westminster Review* (1826).

### Grote's *History of Greece*: The Sophist as a Free-thinker

It is interesting to notice that in his *History of Greece* Grote examined the role of the sophists, together with the rest of the intellectual development of the fifth century, as a way to explain what he considered an “event of paramount interest,” namely the trial and condemnation of Socrates. He was interested in both the intellectual and the political context of this fateful event. Grote argued that from the year 450 BCE downwards there had appeared two important classes of men in Greece unknown to Solon or even to Pericles, which he termed the Rhetoricians and the Dialecticians, for whom “the ground had been gradually prepared by the politics, the poetry, and the speculation, of the preceding period.”<sup>16</sup> Following in Plato's wake, Grote sharply distinguished the two groups: the Rhetoricians catered to the needs of men of action whereas the Dialecticians had no direct link to public life; they opened new

13 Thomas Babington Macaulay, “On Mitford's *History of Greece*” [1824], in *The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay*, vol. 1, 154.

14 “A good government, like a good coat,—he remarked shrewdly—is that which fits the body for which it is designed,” *Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay*, 160.

15 George Henry Lewes, *The Biographical History of Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London: Charles Knight, 1845).

16 Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. 8, chapter 67, 346.

lines of intellectual pursuit and appealed to men interested in abstract speculation. Grote provided an interesting evaluation also of the role of the Old Comedy, and especially of Aristophanes. He commented that it was a sign of the strength of democracy and its men and institutions that they could “tolerate unfriendly tongues either in earnest or in jest.”<sup>17</sup> He went on to argue for the importance of freedom of speech in society in all ages:

It was the blessing and the glory of Athens, that every man could speak out his sentiments and his criticisms with a freedom unparalleled in the ancient world, and hardly paralleled even in the modern, in which a vast body of dissent both is, and always has been, condemned to absolute silence.<sup>18</sup>

However, Grote observed, this freedom of speech gave voice also to a distinct democratic sentiment of antipathy to new ideas and intellectual achievements: this appeared very clearly in the case of the “retrograde spirit” of Aristophanes who attacked philosophy, literature and eloquence “in the name of those good old times of ignorance”; Grote hence lamented the “unfavourable and degrading influence of comedy on the Athenian mind.”<sup>19</sup> And, especially in the *Clouds*, the “misapplied wit and genius of Aristophanes” concurred to give a biased portrait of Socrates (and consequently, we may add, of the sophists). In preparing the ground for his interpretation of the sophists Grote argued for the necessity to examine critically our sources, especially in the case of biased witnesses:

If ever there was need to invoke this rare sentiment of candour, it is when we come to discuss the history of the persons called sophists, who now for the first time appear as of note; the practical teachers of Athens and of Greece, misconceived as well as misesteemed.<sup>20</sup>

Grote recalled that the musical teacher Damon was called a sophist and so had been called also Solon and Pythagoras. In his description, therefore, “a sophist, in the genuine sense of the word, was a wise man, a clever man; one who stood prominently before the public as distinguished for intellect or talent of

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<sup>17</sup> *History*, 330.

<sup>18</sup> *History*, 348.

<sup>19</sup> *History*, 331.

<sup>20</sup> *History*, 349.

some kind.”<sup>21</sup> A definition followed by a long list of well-known people which included Solon and Pythagoras, Aristippus and Antisthenes, Isocrates and Plato himself. He then went on to argue that

In this large and comprehensive sense the word was originally used, and always continued to be so understood among the general public. But along with this idea, the title sophist also carried with it or connoted a certain invidious feeling. The natural temper of people generally ignorant towards superior intellect—the same temper which led to those charges of magic so frequent in the Middle Ages—appears to be a union of admiration with something of an unfavourable sentiment; [...] Timon, who hated the philosophers, thus found the word sophist exactly suitable, in sentiment as well as in meaning, to his purpose in addressing them.<sup>22</sup>

Another characteristic could be added to this envy: the sophists taught for pay, and people like Plato had repugnance against receiving pay for teaching. Following Plato, one could contrast this attitude with that of the Platonic Socrates, who assimilated the relation between teacher and pupil to that between two lovers or two intimate friends. However, Grote very persuasively argued that “if, in the middle of the Peloponnesian war, any Athenian had been asked ‘Who are the principal sophists in your city?’ he would have named Sokrates among the first.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, “these men—whom modern writers set down as the sophists, and denounce as the moral pestilence of their age—were not distinguished in any marked or generic way from their predecessors.”<sup>24</sup> Sophists like Protagoras or Gorgias supplied the demand for higher education in Athens with an unparalleled ability and success and hence “gained a distinction such as none of their predecessors had attained, were prized all over Greece, travelled from city to city with general admiration, and obtained considerable pay.”<sup>25</sup> They incurred in increasing jealousy from “inferior teachers and lovers of ignorance generally.” As for Plato, his hostility “may be explained without at all supposing in them that corruption which modern writers have been so ready not only to admit but to magnify. It arose from the radical difference between his point of view and theirs”: Plato was a radical reformer and

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<sup>21</sup> *History*, 350.

<sup>22</sup> *History*, 352.

<sup>23</sup> *History*, 353.

<sup>24</sup> *History*, 355.

<sup>25</sup> *History*, 356.

found all political regimes of his age defective and was very critical of Athenian democracy; the Sophists' business, on the contrary, was to teach young people, and especially Athenians, how to speak and act in their cities. Grote could thus conclude that Plato's "reforming, as well as his theorizing tendencies, brought him into polemical controversy with all the leading agents by whom the business of practical life at Athens was carried on."<sup>26</sup> The business of the sophists was with ethical precepts, not ethical theory, because "it ought never to be forgotten, that those who taught for active life were bound, by the very conditions of their profession, to adapt themselves to the place and the society as it stood."<sup>27</sup> The difference, for Grote, is thus between the theoretical and the practical approach to politics: Plato heralded in the former while the sophists championed the latter. From this Grote went on to point out that we know the sophists chiefly from the evidence of Plato, their pronounced enemy; Aristotle, on his part, followed the example of his master in giving a negative definition of the term.<sup>28</sup>

After this long preparatory discussion, Grote described the biased image of the sophists current in his age thus:

The sophists are spoken of as a new class of men, or sometimes in language which implies a new doctrinal sect, or school, as if they then sprang up in Greece for the first time; ostentatious imposters, flattering and duping the rich youth for their own personal gain; undermining the morality of Athens, public and private, and encouraging their pupils to the unscrupulous prosecution of ambition and cupidity.<sup>29</sup>

He then commented: "I know few characters in history who have been so hardly dealt with as these so-called sophists."<sup>30</sup> In his view they should rather be called professors or public teachers. In fact, when Plato embarks on the project to define a sophist, the definition he comes up with suits Socrates better than anyone else. In a footnote Grote very appropriately observed that

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<sup>26</sup> *History*, 356–7.

<sup>27</sup> *History*, 358. On this Grote agreed with John Stuart Mill's view that the sophists were "worldly-minded men" who taught arts conducive to worldly success; they could not therefore be revolutionary thinkers. See John Stuart Mill, "Notes on Some of the More Popular Dialogues of Plato" in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963–91), 33 vols, vol. II.

<sup>28</sup> Grote refers to Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I, 1, 4.

<sup>29</sup> *History*, 355.

<sup>30</sup> *History*, 360.



certain German interpreters (he singled out Ritter and Brandis in this case)<sup>31</sup> use Aristophanes' *Clouds* as evidence that the sophists taught corrupting doctrines, with the paradoxical result that they do not use this author against Socrates, whom he attacks, and they quote him against the sophists, whom he does not attack!<sup>32</sup> Another puzzling element which shows the unfair treatment of the sophists in the contemporary literature was the condemnation of Protagoras as an atheist by most commentators. This fact betrayed a patent contradiction for—Grote observed—the people who consider pagan religion a repugnant fiction good for feeble, uncouth minds are the same who denounce Protagoras for his alleged atheism: a disconcerting inconsistency.<sup>33</sup>

Grote went on to point out another topic about which he disagreed with the general opinion, especially that of German philologists: "It has been common with recent German historians of philosophy to translate from Plato and dress up a fiend called 'Die Sophistik' (Sophistic,) whom they assert to have poisoned and demoralized, by corrupt teaching, the Athenian moral character, so that it became degenerate at the end of the Peloponnesian war, compared with what it had been in the time of Miltiades and Aristeides." But the "Sophistic" is an abstraction because the actual sophists did not share any common doctrines, principles or method: "they had nothing in common except their profession, as paid teachers, qualifying young men 'to think, speak and act,' these are the words of Isokrates [...]."<sup>34</sup> Grote rightly observed that there is no reason to believe that Gorgias would have subscribed to Protagoras' view that "man is the measure of all things" and, conversely, Protagoras would have objected to the doctrines put forth by Thrasymachus in book 1 of Plato's *Republic*. "It is impossible therefore to predicate anything concerning doctrines, methods, or tendencies, common and peculiar to all the sophists." Grote also compared the teaching of Hippias with that of Protagoras to show that the former prompted his pupils to study all sorts of disciplines whereas the latter reproached him for making them learn too many subjects. The abstract word "Die Sophistik" has therefore no real meaning—Grote concluded.<sup>35</sup>

Grote went on to examine the doctrines of the sophists one by one, performing in this a double task: he showed the differences in their thought and

31 Grote refers the reader to Heinrich Ritter, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, 12 vols. (Hamburg: F. Berthes, 1829–1853); Christian August Brandis, *Handbuch der Geschichte der Griechisch-Römischen Philosophie* (Berlin: Reimer, 1835–1860).

32 *History*, 363, fn 1.

33 *History*, 366.

34 *History*, 370.

35 *History*, 371.

at the same time revealed the importance of their doctrines. One sophist who received an utter rehabilitation as a serious thinker was Gorgias. Grote maintained that in order to understand Gorgias one must take into account the intellectual context, and especially Parmenides and the Eleatics, who were looking for something existing behind and beyond the senses, a “noumenon” in the Kantian sense. Seen on this background, Gorgias’ doctrine on Not-being makes sense and it is not a matter of pure scepticism. Grote added that one could venture to say that the purpose of his treatise on Not-being was to discourage fruitless theoretical speculations in his students and to recommend rhetorical exercises useful to fulfil the duties of an active citizen.<sup>36</sup> One of Grote’s most refined treatments is devoted to the Platonic dialogue *Gorgias* and its characters. He observed how Gorgias himself is treated with great respect by Socrates and how the tone of the dialogue changes when his pupil Polus and then Kallikles get to speak. Polus is insolent and Socrates deals with him in a harsher way; as for Kallikles, he maintains what Grote describes as “doctrines openly and avowedly anti-social.”<sup>37</sup> His distinction between a law of nature and the law of society is the prelude to his statement that the great man, the strong man, is by nature entitled to act as he pleases while the laws of the city, enacted by the weak many, are designed to imprison and tame him. Justice by nature is thus the opposite of justice in society. Grote’s original and strong point consists in denying firmly that this anti-social position may be ascribed to “the sophists.” His argument is solid and refined and is the result of the careful and unbiased reading of Plato’s text. First of all, “Kallikles himself is not a sophist, nor represented by Plato as such. He is a young Athenian citizen, of rank and station, [...] he disparages philosophy, and speaks with utter contempt about the sophists.” Secondly, it is evident that such a bold anti-social doctrine could not be propounded publicly by anyone because it would have been considered revolting by the hearers. The sophists were public teachers and therefore had to conform to the moral standards of the place where they taught. Especially in the case of Athens such an anti-democratic teaching, which included an exaltation of the tyranny of the strongest, would have been considered utterly rebarbative by any audience. Even if a sophist dared to think anything of the sort, he would have kept it for himself, as Polus did. Grote could therefore conclude that the very point that Socrates and Plato wished to establish in this dialogue was that sophists and rhetoricians cater indulgently to the taste of the Athenian *dēmos*:

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36 *History*, 369–70.

37 *History*, 383.

they courted, flattered, and truckled to the sentiment of the Athenian people, with degrading subservience; that they looked to the immediate gratification simply, and not to permanent moral improvement of the people; that they had no courage to address to them any unpalatable truths, however salutary, but would shift and modify opinions in every way, so as to escape giving offence; that no man who put himself prominently forward at Athens had any chance of success, unless he became moulded and assimilated, from the core, to the people and their type of sentiment. Granting such charges to be true, how is it conceivable that any sophist, or any rhetor, could venture to enforce upon an Athenian public audience the doctrine laid down by Kallikles.<sup>38</sup>

It is therefore absurd to imagine that such skilled rhetoricians would insult their very audience, knowing very well the democratic sentiment prevalent at Athens and wishing to please their public. Grote made a similar reasoning with respect to Thrasymachus, whose portrait depicted by Plato in the *Republic* he found unlikely. If there was something that the sophists had in common it was that, far from being agents of revolution, they contributed to maintain the intellectual and moral *status quo* because it was the basis of their teaching and success. Grote could thus conclude that if there was a moral degeneration in Athens and in Greece in the interval after 480 and the end of the Peloponnesian war this fact should be attributed to some other cause than "this imaginary abstraction called sophistic." Moreover, if one looked at the facts candidly, Athens was not more corrupt at the end of the Peloponnesian war than in the times of Miltiades; "the matter of fact here alleged is as untrue, as the cause alleged is unreal"—Grote commented.<sup>39</sup> He went on to give ample evidence of this, starting with the condemnation of Miltiades and the ostracism of Aristides to arrive to the favour the pious Nicias had with the Athenian people regardless of his flaws as a general. He concluded that if "we survey the eighty-seven years of Athenian history, between the battle of Marathon and the renovation of the democracy after the Thirty, we shall see no ground for the assertion, so often made, of increased and increasing moral and political corruption. It is my belief that the people had become morally and politically better, and that their democracy had worked to their improvement."<sup>40</sup> Grote went on to state: "Yet such is the prejudice with which the history of the sophists has been written, that the commentators on Plato accuse the sophists of

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38 *History*, 387–8.

39 *History*, 371.

40 *History*, 374.

having originated what they ignorantly term, 'the base theory of utility,' here propounded by Sokrates himself."<sup>41</sup> Grote considered Plato an unreliable witness when it comes to the criticism of his society. For Plato believed that his society was totally corrupt, that all the political regimes of his day were bad and not conducive to the creation of good citizens, and that all the sophists, rhetoricians, musicians, poets, statesmen provided a corrupting influence on the citizens. But in fact there was a huge difference, say, between a competent statesman like Pericles and a pious but incompetent one like Nicias, and Protagoras would have considered it an honour and a great achievement if he had been able to inspire a student to become like Pericles. These statements sound less impressive today, when we are accustomed to think that democracy is evidently the best form of government devised by human beings; however, they were groundbreaking and revolutionary in Victorian England, when especially the elites looked with fearful apprehension to the rise of masses and their entrance into the political arena.

### *The Final Rehabilitation: Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*

When Grote devoted himself to an examination of the theories of the first philosophers, as an introduction to his study of Plato so that the context of his thought could scatter light on Plato's great achievements, he remarked that any contemporary reader would be astonished that such far-fetched theories could ever be propounded in earnest and believed. From this he went on to argue that the self-assuredness with which certain contemporary philosophers proclaimed their "first truths or first principles as universal, intuitive, self-evident" was similarly unfounded.<sup>42</sup> "Philosophy is, or aims at becoming, reasoned truth"—Grote maintained;<sup>43</sup> it "aspires to deliver not merely truth, but reasoned truth."<sup>44</sup> He quoted approvingly Ferrier (*The Institutes of Metaphysics*) according to whom "philosophy, in its ideal perfection, is a body of reasoned truth." Therefore philosophy is by necessity polemical because individual reasoners who seek the truth through their reason inevitably "dissent from the unreasoning belief which reigns authoritative in the social

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<sup>41</sup> *History*, 379.

<sup>42</sup> George Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, 3 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1865), vol. 1, 87.

<sup>43</sup> *Plato*, vol. 1, v.

<sup>44</sup> *Plato*, vol. 3, 473; cf. 478.

atmosphere around them."<sup>45</sup> It also follows that these independent reasoners are always rare everywhere.

It is very interesting that Grote transposed this persuasion into his reconstruction of ancient philosophy. The general picture he depicted of early Greek philosophy is one of variety of belief, since each philosopher followed his own reason and arrived at different conclusion from all others; and of essential dissent, in that in so doing each thinker departed from the established creeds of his society and incurred in its reproach: "There is no established philosophical orthodoxy, but a collection of Dissenters"—he commented.<sup>46</sup> He then went on to depict again the general view of the sophists current in his age:

The received supposition that there were at Athens a class of men called Sophists who made money and reputation by obvious fallacies employed to bring about contradictions in dialogue—appears to me to pervert the representations given of ancient philosophy.

To this view Grote opposed first of all a commonsense argument drawn from observation:

Of individuals, the varieties are innumerable; but no professional body of men ever acquired gain or celebrity by maintaining theses, and employing arguments, which every one could easily detect as false.<sup>47</sup>

With a striking revisionist approach, Grote depicts the celebrated Protagoras, the target of accusations to teach relativism of values and impiety, thus: "The Platonic Protagoras, spokesman of King Nomos, represents common sense, sentiment, sympathies and antipathies, written laws, and traditional customs known to all as well as revered by the majority."<sup>48</sup>

This is, however, only half of Grote's contribution to a re-evaluation of the sophists: having shown that it was unwarranted as well as counterintuitive to attribute a revolutionary teaching, corrosive of established mores, to the sophists, Grote went on to argue that it was in fact Socrates, and his pupil Plato,

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45 *Plato*, vol. 1, vii. Cf. James Frederick Ferrier, *The Institutes of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh-London: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1854).

46 *Plato*, vol. 1, 87–8.

47 *Plato*, vol. 1, 542–3.

48 *Plato*, vol. 2, 492. "King Nomos" was a very effective expression coined by Grote (after Herodotus) to describe the power of custom, of a set of uncritically accepted traditional beliefs. It tends to produce "the orthodox citizen."

who had an eristic character and “threw out more startling novelties in ethical doctrine, than either Hippias or Protagoras, or any of the other persons denounced as Sophists.”<sup>49</sup> Consequently, we can better appreciate the value and innovativeness of Grote’s general depiction of the sophists when we contrast it with his portrait of Socrates, which is similarly well-balanced and innovative. In general, Socrates and the sophists are the champions of what Grote called “the dialectic age.”<sup>50</sup> In this definition he followed a hint from Aristotle, who observed that the earlier philosophers had no part in dialectics: “dialectical force did not yet exist.”<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, in dating the beginning of dialectics in the fifth century Grote attributed its start to “the Athenian drama and dikastery,” namely to the tragic poets and to the practices of courts, where diverging opinions confronted each other in a battle for the truth.<sup>52</sup> Grote started his examination of Socrates by saying that he was the first thinker who “brought into conscious review the *method* of philosophising.”<sup>53</sup> Socrates introduced a complete revolution in method because he did not try to impart a positive doctrine: Grote emphasized the “negative” aspect of Socratic dialectic, namely the fact that Socrates questioned the basic assumptions of his society concerning morality and politics: “A person more thoroughly Eristic than Sokrates never lived”—he commented in his *Plato*.<sup>54</sup> This is not Socrates’ only claim to greatness: for Grote, he was also the first thinker to “conceive the idea of an ethical science with its appropriate end, and with precepts capable of being tested and improved.”<sup>55</sup> However, he saw in Socrates’ deliberate attempt at questioning and shaking common-sense truths and commonplaces his most original and important contribution.<sup>56</sup> It is at this stage that the tone of Grote’s

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49 *Plato*, vol. 1, 395.

50 *Plato*, vol. 1, viii.

51 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 987b32. Cf. Grote, *Plato*, vol. 1, 96.

52 *Plato*, vol. 1, p. 256: “Both the drama and the dikastery recognise two or more different ways of looking at a question, and require that no conclusion shall be pronounced until opposing disputants have been heard and compared.”

53 *Plato*, vol. 1, 95.

54 *Plato*, vol. 3, 479. Elsewhere in this work Grote says that “the Elenchus is the grand and sovereign purification” and the “great Sokratic accomplishment and mission”: vol. 2, 409.

55 *History*, 67, 447.

56 At the time of writing his *Plato*, in his examination of the *Republic*, Grote will provide a more complex portrait of Socrates, or rather of Plato, which can be epitomized by the following quote: “While his spokesman Sokrates was leader of the opposition, Plato delighted to arm him with the maximum of negative cross-examining acuteness: but here Sokrates has passed over to the ministerial benches [...]” (vol. 3, 165). And further on we read: “He [Socrates] is no longer a dissenter amidst a community of fixed, inherited,

prose rises and the horizon of his analysis broadens while his attention focuses on his contemporary society:

The phenomenon here adverted to is too obvious, even at the present day, to need further elucidation as matter of fact. In morals, in politics, in political economy, on all subjects relating to man and society, the like confident persuasion of knowledge without the reality is sufficiently prevalent: the like generation and propagation, by authority and example, of unverified convictions, resting upon strong sentiment, without consciousness of the steps or conditions of their growth; the like enlistment of reason as the one-sided advocate of a pre-established sentiment; the like illusion, because every man is familiar with the language, that therefore every man is master of the complex facts, judgments, and tendencies, involved in its signification, and competent both to apply comprehensive words and to assume the truth or falsehood of large propositions, without any special analysis or study.<sup>57</sup>

It is at this level that Grote makes his analysis of the ancient thinkers bear on the contemporary situation by introducing the timeless notion of the "orthodox citizen" who, in any epoch, "does not feel himself in need of philosophers to tell him what is truth or what is virtue, nor what is the difference between real and fancied knowledge." This orthodox citizen belongs to any society of any age, and is not characterized by any specific social, political or economic condition but rather by his uncritical acceptance of the beliefs and values of his society:

Such feeling of disapprobation and antipathy against speculative philosophy and dialectic—against the *libertas philosophandi*—counts as a branch of virtue among practical and orthodox citizens, rich or poor, oligarchical or democratical, military or civil, ancient or modern.<sup>58</sup>

Grote's treatment of certain Platonic dialogues goes in the same direction and serves the same purpose, namely to show the importance of the Socratic negative method. In this perspective, Grote interpreted the *Euthyphro* as Plato's

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convictions. He is himself in the throne of King Nomos: the infallible authority, temporal as well as spiritual, from whom all public sentiment emanates, and by whom orthodoxy is determined" (vol. 3, 240).

57 *History*, 438.

58 *Plato*, vol. 1, 263.



subtle attempt at showing how the pretence of knowledge about divine things may prompt a believer to commit terrible acts like indicting one's own father. Examining the two *Hippias*, he commented—on the authority of Aristotle—that the search for definitions was a valuable novelty introduced by Socrates to which his contemporaries, including the sophists, were not accustomed to. The result is that Hippias is derided in the two dialogues because unable to grasp a general definition instead of providing examples.

On a more general level, Grote found that Socrates' way to purge the mind of its presumption to knowledge and to search for the truth was a "genuine inductive method" and was therefore similar to that of Bacon. In support of this necessity of intellectual purification preached by Socrates as a precondition to genuine knowledge, Grote quoted many passages from the *Novum Organon* and even from the contemporary astronomer John Herschel. Consequently, he saw in Plato's depiction of Socrates in his dialogues—arguing and counter-arguing often without reaching an apparent positive result—a confirmation of the mostly didactic value Plato attributed to them: the dialogues were designed to illustrate the genuine Socratic spirit and his "negative" dialectic. And Grote very reasonably added that if Plato had wished to communicate a positive doctrine to his readers, he would have plainly done so, without leaving his "purpose thus in the dark, visible only by the microscope of a critic."<sup>59</sup> As a result, Grote consistently interpreted the many Platonic dialogues which end with an apparently negative result "as being really negative and nothing beyond."<sup>60</sup> The great merit of the dialogues of search, he will say further on, is to be suggestive of the process of trial and error by which the human mind dispels mistakes and searches for the truth.<sup>61</sup>

By comparing the method and respective target of Socrates and the sophists, Grote concluded that it was wrong to suppose that, because they were at variance and Socrates was obviously a good person and philosopher, the latter were corrupt teachers. For "as they aimed at qualifying young men for active life, they accepted the current ethical and political sentiment, with its unexamined commonplaces and inconsistencies, merely seeking to shape it into what was accounted a meritorious character at Athens."<sup>62</sup> Conversely, the method and mission of Socrates "could not but prove eminently unpopular and obnoxious."<sup>63</sup> For he showed people who were convinced of their

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59 *History*, 453.

60 *Plato*, vol. 1, 9.

61 *Plato*, vol. 1, 402.

62 *History*, 456.

63 *History*, 466.

knowledge that they were in fact profoundly ignorant; this painful realization made some of these people his fiercest enemies. Grote states this very clearly in his *Plato*: "Nothing can be more repugnant to an ordinary mind than the thorough sifting of deep-seated, long familiarised, notions."<sup>64</sup>

In depicting such unconventional portraits of Socrates and the sophists Grote succeeded in showing their theoretical differences while emphasizing their similar practical impact on their contemporaries: they were almost undistinguishable by the ordinary Athenian who found them subversive thinkers, critics of the customs and mores. Grote then attacked the contemporary historians of philosophy who accused the sophists of being corruptors of the Greek youth and drew a sharp distinction between them and Socrates by remarking that the charges they press on the sophists are exactly the same which were urged against Socrates by his contemporaries. This unfair treatment is evident if one looks at dialogues such as the *Parmenides*, with its contradictory hypotheses about the one and the many, which would be considered empty sophistry if attributed to an author other than Plato. In addition, by looking at the evidence fairly, it appeared evident that the sophists had no reason to question the beliefs and values of the cities they visited and where they thrived whereas Socrates used his dialectical tools exactly for this purpose: "the negative analysis was the weapon of Sokrates, and not of Protagoras, Prodikus, Hippias, &c."<sup>65</sup> This conviction is reinforced by his examination of the *Apology of Socrates*, which in his opinion substantially reproduces the real defence pronounced by Socrates before the jury and the people of Athens. This work shows that Socrates thought his general mission to be to question the established beliefs passing for knowledge "whereby King Nomos governs."<sup>66</sup> The *Crito* is interpreted as both a sequel to and a correction of the *Apology*, for in it Plato shows Socrates' constitutional allegiance as well as his individuality as a free thinker. Indeed, in Socrates' statement that there can be no common deliberation between those who uphold an opinion like his and those who do not, Grote found an example of the "Protagorean dogma," namely the doctrine of the *homo mensura*: "my reason and conscience is the measure for me."<sup>67</sup>

It is in his examination of the Platonic dialogues devoted to the two greatest sophists, Protagoras and Gorgias, that Grote gave his best in his novel interpretation of the sophists. When he came to examine the *Protagoras* he found in it a contrast between Socrates "the analytical enquirer and cross-examiner" and

64 *Plato*, vol. 2, 12.

65 *Plato*, vol. 1, 260, fn k.

66 *Plato*, vol. 1, 296.

67 *Plato*, vol. 1, 305.

the famous sophist portrayed as an “eloquent popular lecturer,” who adopts a showy method in order to teach the same morality upheld by all citizens: far from questioning or overthrowing the values of the city, Protagoras gives them for granted and “fixed in the public sentiments.”<sup>68</sup> And when it comes to the content of Protagoras’ doctrines, Grote finds them not only in conformity with the common opinion of the age but also quite true. He can then conclude that Plato’s intention in this dialogue does not seem to be to prove Protagoras wrong and to deride his ideas but rather to work through the dialogue his idea that virtue is knowledge and consists in a right measurement and choice of pleasures and pain, obtained through an art (or science) of measurement. Again, in the examination of the *Gorgias* Grote’s sound reasoning, based on textual evidence as well as on matter-of-fact observation of everyday life, issues in a solid argument in defence of the sophists. It was (and still is) typical to argue that the character of Callicles propounds theories taught by the sophists at Athens, such as the superiority by nature of the strongest. But—Grote observed—besides being unlikely if not altogether impossible that the sophists taught such a doctrine in a democratic city, it must be noted that Plato introduces Callicles as a rhetorician who aspires at becoming an influential politician: he is not presented as a sophist; indeed, Callicles despises sophists and philosophers alike. We may then refer to the *Theaetetus* for further illumination. This dialogue presents and deals with Protagoras’ most famous doctrine, according to which “man is the measure of all things.” Grote maintained that this celebrated statement should not be construed as implying that every opinion is true but rather that “every opinion delivered by any man is true, to that man himself.”<sup>69</sup> Plato omits this all-important qualification in his discussion with the result of making Protagoras’ doctrine self-refuting: a consequence which is easily avoided if the doctrine is correctly interpreted as meaning that each truth is relative to the person who maintains it. What Protagoras meant to argue was that there is no object without a subject; in modern, Kantian language we could say that he wanted to deny the existence of “the Thing in itself,” of something existing beyond our perceptions. Furthermore, Protagoras did not maintain that all measures are equal in value for some are better than others: “How far any person is a measure of truth to others, depends upon the estimation in which he is held by others.” The Protagorean doctrine is thus perfectly consistent with great diversity in knowledge and other capacities between one human being and the other.<sup>70</sup>

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68 *Plato*, vol. 2, 73–5.

69 *Plato*, vol. 2, 347–8.

70 *Plato*, vol. 2, 351.

It is at this level that the tone of Grote's prose rises again, when he states his profound dissent with Socrates' criticism of Protagoras: for he believes that the logic of the *homo mensura* formula is not only inescapable in philosophical argument, where each speaker is taken as the measure of truth for oneself; but it is also the foundation of any liberal society which does not silence discussion. In fact, dialectical discussion, philosophical argument, the very Socratic method stand on the premise that each man's beliefs are true relatively to him; but this does not imply that he is omniscient or infallible. The significance Grote attributes to this point is signalled by his entering the discussion using the first person: "I for my part admit this distinction to be real and important. Most other persons admit the same."<sup>71</sup> By denying the truth of the Protagorean assumption, "the basis of all free discussion and scrutiny is withdrawn: philosophy, or what is properly called reasoned truth, disappears." The foundation of philosophy, interpreted as the search for truth, implying the questioning and replacement of opinion, is exactly the Protagorean formula, because the philosopher as free thinker, as opposed to the dogmatist, wants to examine even the most revered opinions (and allows others to do the same with his): indeed, "no one demands more emphatically to be a measure for himself, even when all authority is opposed to him, than Sokrates in the Platonic *Gorgias*."<sup>72</sup> Grote maintains that the alternative to the Protagorean position is to pronounce someone unfit to be the measure of truth for himself and then substitute oneself for him or her; or some other authority, like "the King, the Pope, the Priest, the Judges or Censors, the author of some book, or the promulgator of such and such doctrine."<sup>73</sup> Such a view is despotic in character and contradicted by evidence, because observation shows that this natural intolerance prevalent among mankind is coupled with diversity of opinion about truth: "that which governs the mind as infallible authority in one part of the globe, is treated with indifference or contempt elsewhere"—he judiciously observed.<sup>74</sup> Since "no infallible objective mark, no common measure, no canon of evidence, recognised by all, has yet been found" a consistent philosopher (and a liberal thinker) must rest content to be a measure for himself and for those

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<sup>71</sup> *Plato*, vol. 2, 355.

<sup>72</sup> *Plato*, vol. 2, 363. In his examination of Plato's *Sophist* Grote points out that the conclusion urged there—that the intelligible world is also relative—amounts to a defence of Protagoras' dictum, which denied the existence of an Absolute: vol. 2, 440.

<sup>73</sup> *Plato*, vol. 2, 359.

<sup>74</sup> *Plato*, vol. 2, 360.

who are persuaded by his arguments; again, the alternative is intolerance and despotism.<sup>75</sup>

Quite naturally, the rehabilitation of the sophists from the accusation of immorality and impiety went hand in hand with Grote's re-evaluation of Athenian democracy. Far from attacking the democratic government which condemned Socrates, Grote observed that he was allowed to continue his mission of cross-examining his fellow-citizens for over twenty-five years, a feat impossible in any other Greek city:

It was this established liberality of the democratical sentiment at Athens which so long protected the noble eccentricity of Sokrates from being disturbed by the numerous enemies which he provoked.<sup>76</sup>

### Grote's Legacy

It is hard to underestimate the daring novelty of Grote's interpretation of the sophists: the combination of subtle philosophical analysis, background historical knowledge, sheer good sense in dealing with different interpretations, complete familiarity with the contemporary literature and the evident presence of a political agenda (which gave to his account a vibrant twist) made his image of the sophists almost revolutionary for the age.<sup>77</sup> Grote succeeded in rescuing the sophists from their bad fame, in demonstrating—both with reasoning and with textual evidence—that they were serious thinkers undeserving of the name

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75 It is very interesting, and noteworthy, that Grote's friend and liberal theorist John Stuart Mill completely disagreed with him on this point. For Mill "the truth of a belief does not consist in its being believed, but in its being in accordance with fact": John Stuart Mill, "Grote's Aristotle" in *Collected Works*, vol. 11, 500–1 fn. See also his "Grote's Plato" in *Collected Works*, vol. 11, 427. Among the reception of Grote's portrait of Protagoras especially interesting is E.M. Cope's, "Plato's 'Theaetetus' and Mr. Grote's Criticisms" in Kyriakos N. Demetriou, ed., *Classics in the Nineteenth Century: Responses to George Grote* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2004), vol. 1, xlv, xlv.

76 *History*, 467. Grote reiterated this idea in his *Plato*: "Nowhere else except at Athens could Sokrates have gone on until seventy years of age talking freely in the market-place against the received political and religious orthodoxy" (vol. 2, 493).

77 This is not to deny that there were, or had been, other dissonant voices in the interpretation of the sophists. See Whedbee, "British Reception of the Greek Sophists prior to 1850," 614 ff. Grote, however, accomplished something unprecedented because of the unique refinement and completeness of his account, which had an unparalleled influence on the readers.

of corruptors of the Greek mores. His portrait was at once accurate in using the historical sources and unprecedented in its final results. In addition, he presented the readers with a novel image of the relationship between Socrates (and Plato) and the sophists, where the former was shown to be the real “dissenter” who questioned the traditional beliefs and the authority of convention (King Nomos); whilst the latter more readily accepted the values of the city where they worked and thrived as teachers of virtue and the art of speech: they taught the traditional morality of the city and the rules of speaking in a specific context and political arrangement.

However, Plato's influence and old philosophical and political prejudices proved hard to dispel and Grote's image of the sophists remained far from mainstream. If his close friend and fellow Radical philosopher John Stuart Mill shared almost completely his portrait of the sophists,<sup>78</sup> it is fair to say that Grote's line of interpretation remained a minority position. It was likely a combination of philosophical and political reasons which continued to keep the sophists in a minor role in the history of Greek, and more generally, Western philosophy. Grote was successful in dispelling the accusation of their being mere quibblers and corruptors of the youth; but he was not able to credit them with being original and important thinkers, their importance being almost always completely overshadowed by Plato. However, Grote's refined and comprehensive account provided for the first time a powerful counter-interpretation of the thought and role of the sophists in Greek civilization and Western thought, an alternative to the dominant, nay hegemonic, view current at the age (and for centuries before). An interesting contemporary case is represented by the book of Théophile Funck-Brentano, *Les sophistes grecs et les sophistes contemporaines*, where thinkers such as Comte, J.S. Mill and Spencer are portrayed as maintaining similar philosophical outlooks as the ancient sophists: they are persuaded that there is no truth and that a battle of interpretations rages in all fields.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, two great British classicists, Benjamin Jowett and Alexander Grant, acknowledged the many merits of Grote's assessment of the sophists but maintained that philosophically they were second-rate thinkers and that the moral accusations levelled at them was not an invention of Plato since they had incurred ill repute at Athens before his

78 For their differences see Giovanni Giorgini, “Radical Plato: John Stuart Mill, George Grote and the Revival of Plato in Nineteenth-Century England,” *History of Political Thought* 30 (2009): 617–46.

79 See Théophile Funck-Brentano, *Les sophistes grecs et les sophistes contemporaines* (Paris: Plon, 1879).

appearance.<sup>80</sup> However, Grote's reassessment of the sophists received harsh criticism but found also some admirers, such as the Cambridge utilitarian philosopher Henry Sidgwick, who hailed it as a "historical discovery of the highest order."<sup>81</sup> Among the few authors who completely accepted Grote's account of the sophists in the late nineteenth century there was the Austrian ancient philosopher Theodor Gomperz, author of a monumental and influential work on "the Greek Thinkers." Gomperz, himself a liberal thinker and translator and editor of John Stuart Mill in German, spoke of "The age of Enlightenment" to describe fifth century Greek philosophy and especially the impact of the sophists and the atomistic philosophers on Greek society.<sup>82</sup>

In the twentieth century the reception of the sophists began to change in the 1930s when Plato became associated with Fascism and Nazism. A dramatic turn occurred after World War Two or, more precisely, after the publication of Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), where Plato was indicted of being a "totalitarian" philosopher and the first systematic defender of a "holistic" view of the State.<sup>83</sup> Regardless of its philosophical shortcomings and factual philological mistakes, the book had a huge impact on Plato's scholarship and, more generally, on the interpretation of Greek philosophy. As a fairly predictable consequence, the sophists were rehabilitated as champions of free thinking, an interpretation which would find its peak in E. Havelock's *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics*, where the sophists appeared as Plato's counterpart and as proto-liberal thinkers.<sup>84</sup> A more balanced assessment was

80 See Benjamin Jowett, Introduction to Plato's *Sophist* in *The Dialogues of Plato*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1871), vol. 3, 325 ff.; Alexander Grant, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1866), vol. 1, 104–55.

81 See Henry Sidgwick, "The Sophists," *Journal of Philology* 4 (1872): 288–307.

82 Theodor Gomperz, *Griechische Denker* (Leipzig: Velt, 1896–1909); English translation: *The Greek Thinkers* (London: J. Murray, 1901–12). Gomperz was the translator and editor of John Stuart Mill's works in German and became Mill's friend and the promulgator of his philosophy in the German-speaking world. See Adelaide Weinberg, *Theodor Gomperz and John Stuart Mill* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1963).

83 Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1945), vol. 1: *The Spell of Plato*. The book sparked a huge controversy over Plato's "totalitarianism," with accusers and defenders. For a good assessment see Renfort Bambrough, ed., *Plato, Popper and Politics* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1967); Kyriakos N. Demetriou, "A 'Legend' in Crisis: The Debate over Plato's Politics, 1930–1960," *Polis* 19 (2002): 61–91.

84 Eric Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (London: Methuen, 1957). The book was the target of a scathing review by Leo Strauss, who opposed solid philosophical and historical reasons to the alleged existence of a Greek Enlightenment and of an ancient Liberalism: "The Liberalism of Classical Political Philosophy" [1959], reprinted in Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 26–64.



put forth by the Cambridge classicist W.K.C. Guthrie, author of a very influential *History of Greek Philosophy*, who in 1969 could still write: "Until comparatively recently the prevailing view, the view in which a scholar of my own generation was brought up, was that in his quarrel with the Sophists Plato was right. He was what he claimed to be, the real philosopher or lover of wisdom, and the Sophists were superficial, destructive, and at worst deliberate deceivers, purveyors of sophistry in the modern sense of the term."<sup>85</sup> After Guthrie another English author has been instrumental in reviving the thought of the sophists and in reassessing their value: G.B. Kerferd. In his *The Sophistic Movement* (1981), Kerferd described the traditional position of the sophists in these terms: "Condemned to a kind of half-life between Presocratics to the one hand and Plato and Aristotle on the other, they seem to wander for ever as lost souls."<sup>86</sup> Kerferd attributed their sad fate to a combination of factors: the fact that none of their works survived to allow an independent exploration and Plato's hostility, made worse by his literary and philosophical genius. In France a powerful reassessment strongly influenced by Grote's main ideas was given by the Thucydides scholar Jacqueline de Romilly in *Les grands sophistes dans l'Athènes de Périclès*: she depicted them, and especially Protagoras and Gorgias, as champions of free thought and masters of the art of reasoning who exercised considerable influence on the development of Western civilization.<sup>87</sup> A generation of ancient scholars, led by Barbara Cassin, followed in her footsteps.<sup>88</sup> Finally, in Italy an echo of Grote's lesson can be found in the works of the ancient philosopher Mario Untersteiner, author of a ground-breaking, dense volume on the sophists (translated in many languages) and of an edition of their fragments characterized by immense erudition coupled with very original interpretations.<sup>89</sup> Differently from Grote, Untersteiner believed that "la Sofistica" was a school characterized by free thinking and criticism of the Parmenidean

85 W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), vol. 3, 10.

86 George B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1.

87 Jacqueline de Romilly, *Les grands sophistes dans l'Athènes de Périclès* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1988); English edition: *The Great Sophists in Periclean Athens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). De Romilly describes the sophists as "maitres à penser" and "maitres à parler" who produced a "real intellectual and moral revolution" (29).

88 Barbara Cassin, ed., *Positions de la sophistique* (Paris: Vrin, 1986); *L'effet sophistique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995).

89 Mario Untersteiner, *I Sofisti* (Turin: Einaudi, 1949); *I Sofisti. Testimonianze e frammenti* 4 vols. (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1949–62). There exists an English translation by Kathleen Freeman: *The Sophists* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954). Very interesting, also as a testimony of

substance; he credited the sophists, together with the poet Aeschylus, to have discovered the “tragedy of being” because, as Protagoras put it, “about every thing (*pragma*) there are two contrasting discourses”;<sup>90</sup> the sophists and the dramatic poets pointed out the existence of tragic moral dilemmas characterized by *dike* against *dike*: the possibility of having two contrasting *logoi* about everything meant, in Untersteiner’s interpretation, acknowledging the relativity of all values and the tragic impossibility to overcome the contradictions of reality; hence Protagoras’ grand view of man as the measure of all things in a world devoid of gods.

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the spirit of the age, is Untersteiner’s other great work, *La fisiologia del mito* [1946] (2nd edition Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1972).

90 DK 80 A 1 = Diog. Laert. IX, 51. It is characteristic of Untersteiner’s interpretation that he translated *pragma* as “experience”; very interpretative and peculiar is also his rendering of Protagoras’ *homo mensura* as “man is the dominator of all experiences.” Untersteiner went on to argue that Protagoras’ “kreiton logos” was an anticipation of the concept.

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## Grote on Alexander the Great

*Pierre Briant*

In her memoirs, presented as a diary, Harriet Grote regularly offers information about the writing stages and publication of what John Mill called the *magnum opus* of her husband—from the first exchange about this direction that she had with George Grote in the fall of 1823 to the publication of the two first volumes of his *History of Greece* in March 1846. In December 1855, she notes the extreme fatigue of the person she referred to as “the Historian,” exhausted by two years devoted to preparing the last volume. After completing the rereading of the galleys that occupied them both through the Christmas holidays in 1855, this twelfth volume was published by John Murray in March of 1856.<sup>1</sup> Composed of eight chapters, plus an appendix and index, spanning a total of 663 pages, this volume includes four chapters devoted to the reign of Alexander the Great (xci–xciv). The accession of Alexander was first mentioned in Volume 11 (p. 714), which, after dealing with the politics of Sicily until 336 BCE (chapters LXXXIII–LXXXV), is then devoted to Macedonia and Greece, then to the accession of Philip II (Chapter LXXXVI) until his death (chapter XC). This volume ends with an overall assessment of the reign of Philip (11, 716–721) who in a certain sense introduces the reign of Alexander. After summarizing the personality and achievements of Alexander (12, 346–369), Grote continues his narrative with an analysis of the evolution of the Greek cities of Europe and the eastern and western Mediterranean region (chapters xcv–xcviii). In doing so he fulfills the promise made at the very beginning in his Preface (1, 1846, ix–x) where he envisions devoting a sixth part of his study to “the history of the Grecian communities from the battle of Chaironea to the end of the generation of Alexander,” in other words the years 336–300 BCE; or to use his own

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\* Translation by C. Jon Delogu.

1 See Harriet Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote, Compiled from Family Documents, Private Memoranda, and Original Letters to and from Various Friends*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1873), 49, 51, 67, 70, 153, 160–3, 187, 195–6, 215, 221, 223–7, 233–4. On the writing of *History*, see also M.L. Clarke, *George Grote: A Biography* (London: University of London; The Athlone Press, 1962), 76–80 and 103–121. It should be noted that Grote introduced some modifications in a later edition, but they are very minor, and therefore I have preferred to use the 1856 edition as my source of reference.

expression, “into that gulf of Grecian nullity which marks the succeeding century” (12, 529).

### Grote and his Sources

It is known that in the Preface to Volume 1 (1846, iii), Grote openly states that his project was shaped to a certain extent by his desire to combat the methods and arguments developed by William Mitford in his earlier *History of Greece*. Grote had already launched a vigorous counterattack in a review that appeared in the April 1826 issue of the *Westminster Review* principally devoted to the recent publication of H.F. Clinton's *Fasti Hellenici* (1824) wherein he declares his wish “to seize the opportunity afforded by this work [...] especially to examine the merits and credibility of the most recent and celebrated book on the subject, Mr. Mitford's history of Greece” (270). He goes on to affirm that “it is abundantly certain that democracies were by far the best among all the Grecian governments,” and he refutes point by point the analysis that Mitford had given of the hostile activities of Athens and Philip on the Thracian and Macedonian coasts (308–325). His openly stated goal is to ruin the reputation of Mitford's work, which, despite the crossfire between these liberals, maintained a preeminent place in many classrooms.<sup>2</sup>

This article from 1826 does not discuss the history of Alexander, even though Volume 5 of Mitford's *History* devoted to the Macedonian conquest had appeared in 1818. The only explicit reference concerns the Macedonian royalty and institutions about which Grote (among other liberal reformers) opposes the representation put forward by Mitford,<sup>3</sup> denouncing him as an idolater of

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2 See also the highly negative review by T. Macaulay, “On Mitford's History of Greece,” *Knight's Quarterly Magazine* 3 (1824): 285–304. The author of the less severe review in the *Edinburgh Review* (1808): 478–517 considers “unfortunate that the story of the Grecian republics should have been told by one who has so many anti-republican partialities” (517). We will point out the defense provided by Mitford's brother, Lord Redesdale, in a foreword to the 1838 edition of the *History of Greece* (including xiii on the image of Alexander developed by Mitford). On the dissemination of Mitford's ideas in schools, see in particular J.R. Major (Rev.), *Questions Adapted to Mitford's History of Greece, For the Use of Students, and the Purposes of Education Generally* (London: Cadell; Cambridge: R. Newby, 1827), 223–27 on Alexander.

3 W. Mitford, *The History of Greece* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1818), vol. 5, 1–2, 21–35, judged the Macedonian monarchy to be very different from “the despotism of the East or the absolute dominion of many European monarchs.” There is no doubt, he added, that “the Macedonian was a limited monarchy [and that] the Macedonians might be reckoned a free people.”

the power of kings.<sup>4</sup> Bringing up the question in his own *History* (11, 297–9), Grote admits the thesis that the Macedonian royalty was a “limited monarchy,” but he goes on to point out that no assembly existed to constitute the least opposition to the king, and that there is “no evidence of coordinate political bodies or standing apparatus [...] such as to justify in any way the comparison drawn by a modern historian between the Macedonian and English constitutions.”<sup>5</sup> Everyone understood that the “modern historian” alluded to was Mitford. However, in Volume 12 Grote does not comment on the heated criticisms that had been made by several commentators of Mitford’s *Alexander*, a work that was accused of reducing history to a mere list of places and battles without any care for the philosophical dimension of history.<sup>6</sup>

It is true that Grote’s observations on Alexander are themselves very story-like, extending over four diachronic chapters that are extremely classical and even traditional in character. From the accession of the young king (chapter XCI) to his death (chapter XCIV), Grote gives a detailed presentation of the conquests, campaign by campaign, devoting very long and very detailed developments to military affairs and the evolution of battles and sieges, even while promising to cover more quickly the later battles and conquests that follow the burning of Persepolis and the death of Darius, insofar as, according to him (12, 244), they concern far less the history of Greeks. From this perspective, it can be said that Grote hardly sticks to the rule for authoring a history of Greece that he had reproached Mitford for breaking when he writes: “There is no historical subject whatever which more imperiously demands, or more amply repays, both philosophy and research.”<sup>7</sup> Apart from some passing observations and the passage devoted to an assessment of Alexander’s reign, the book is

4 Cf. *The Westminster Review* 6 (1826): 282. On this point see my study, P. Briant, “Les débats sur la royauté macédonienne dans l’Europe du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: quelques jalons anglais,” in *Stéphanèphoros. De l’économie antique à l’Asie mineure. Hommages à Raymond Descat*, ed. K. Konuk (textes réunis par—) (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2012), 221–7.

5 See also George Grote, *History of Greece* (London: John Murray, 1856), vol. 12, 262–3 on the subject of the assembly of soldiers gathered to “judge” Philotas. Grote recalls that the convocation corresponded “to an ancient Macedonian custom, in regard of capital crimes, though (as it seems) not uniformly practiced”; but he demonstrates no less clearly that the king used the assembly to impose his own plans. Elsewhere (12, 359) he admits that the Macedonians exercised “free speech” [*isègoria*], but that Alexander hated this custom.

6 See in particular *The Quarterly Review* 25 (April–June 1821): 154–174. On these debates in England, see my remarks in P. Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières (Fragments d’histoire européenne)* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), 148–150, 409–410.

7 *The Westminster Review* 6 (1826), 280; see also Macaulay, “On Mitford’s History of Greece,” 302. The historian, according to Grote, should not limit himself to “military and political



devoid of any conceptual or methodological plan—at least there's nothing to compare with the depth of reflection in evidence in the volumes on Athens, an essential object of admiration for Grote and his liberal associates.

One wonders what Grote read and used to inform his account. The question is all the more essential when one recalls that the previous century had been rich in presentations and meditations on the history of Alexander, and that the first third of the nineteenth century had also been a prolific period. For example, it can be noted that the twelfth tome of the *History of Greece* appears exactly one hundred years after the second revised edition of *De l'esprit des lois* (1748, 1757) in which Alexander's empire and mode of governing were held up as models. The influence of Montesquieu and Voltaire was immense throughout Europe, and especially in Scotland (William Robertson, John Gillies), England (William Vincent), and Germany (Heeren).<sup>8</sup> In his 1826 review-essay in the *Westminster Review* directed against Mitford, Grote (270) extended his criticism toward other "ordinary histories of Greece," including that of Rollin ("with hardly any philosophy"),<sup>9</sup> the famous work by Heeren ("uncommon

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transactions [... He] will not disdain to discuss the state of agriculture, of the mechanical arts, and of the conveniences of art."

8 On this point I refer the reader to my *Alexandre des Lumières, passim* (see a review of the question at 11–30 and 636–43). I do not agree with what J. Moore and I. Macgregor Morris have written recently regarding the long eighteenth century, "History in Revolution? Approaches to the Ancient World in the long Eighteenth Century," in *Reinventing History: The Enlightenment Origins of Ancient History*, ed. J. Moore, I. Macgregor Morris and A.J. Bayliss (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2008), 13: "The Hellenistic period was almost entirely overlooked. Alexander received little interest until the nineteenth century." This statement is all the more surprising since the entire book is precisely dedicated to a reconsideration of the historiographical contribution of the eighteenth century, and because in this same volume Macgregor Morris takes pains to denounce "the legend of Grote" and "the Grotesque influence" by showing how the historiography of the eighteenth century had been "marginalized" by Grote (cf. 267–274, on the subject of his attacks against Mitford) and by the Modern Scholarship (274–290). But in conformity with the Introduction to the volume, I. Macgregor Morris never discusses Grote's views on the history of Alexander, thus contributing himself (even if in an indirect and paradoxical way) to maintaining the marginalization of eighteenth-century historiography that often took up the subject of the young Macedon king and the consequences of his conquests in Europe and Asia.

9 Charles Rollin's *Histoire ancienne des Égyptiens, des Carthaginois, des Assyriens, des Mèdes et des Perses, des Macédoniens, des Grecs*, 13 vols. (Paris: chez Estienne, 1731–1738), had an enormous influence in Europe for over a century (P. Briant, *Darius dans l'ombre d'Alexandre*, Paris, Fayard, 2003 [*Darius in the Shadow of Alexander*, Harvard U.P., forthcoming, 2014]) and was also known in Great Britain through an English translation. Book XV, which discusses Alexander, was published several times as a separate monograph: Rollin, *The History and*

eloquence and animation [...] but slender penetration”),<sup>10</sup> and also the *Anacharsis* of Abbé Barthélemy (“liable to the same objections and in a much higher degree”).<sup>11</sup> We can see that Grote evoked neither the *philosophes* nor other earlier histories of Greece that appeared in England (e.g., Gast, Gillies) or on the Continent (e.g., Mably). An examination of Volumes 11 and 12 of his *History* suggests that he did not make use of Rollin’s *Alexandre*. As for Heeren, he is quoted only once (12, 237–9) in a note concerning treasures of the great king captured by Alexander.

In the meantime, between 1835 and 1844, there appeared Connop Thirlwall’s *History of Greece* in eight volumes that immediately became an authoritative work on the subject. J.S. Mill claimed that the author had “effectually destroyed Mitford as an historical authority,” even though at the same time, when compared to Grote, he demurred that Thirlwall’s *History* “[did] not attempt to be a philosophical history.”<sup>12</sup> Volume 6 [From the end of the Sacred War (346) . . . to Alexander’s campaigns in Bactria and Sogdiana (327)] was published in 1839; Volume 7 [From Alexander’s campaigns in India (327) . . . to the battle of Ipsus (301)], appeared the following year in 1840.<sup>13</sup> The work quickly gained an international reputation. It broke the scientific and scholarly hegemony held by Germany and its historians, even if as a genre Greek history had first appeared in England.<sup>14</sup> An abridged German translation in two volumes was published

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*Travels of Alexander the Great*, New translation from the French (Berwick: R. Taylor, 1770); Rollin, *The Life of Alexander the Great, King of Macedon, Compiled from Ancient History* (Philadelphia, 1796).

- 10 Heeren’s book, *Ideen zur Politik, den Verkehr und der Handel der vornehmsten Völker der Alten Welt*, was translated into English in 1833. See Arnold-Herman-Ludwig Heeren, *Historical Researches into the Politics, Intercourse and Trade of the Principal Nations of Antiquity*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Talboys, 1833).
- 11 Published in Paris in 1787, it was translated into English as *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece* (London: Robinsons, 1790–91), and has been constantly reprinted since.
- 12 J.S. Mill, “Early Grecian History and Legend: A Review of the First Two Volumes of Grote’s History of Greece,” in *Dissertations and Discussions: Political, Philosophical and Historical*, 3 vols. (Boston: W. Spencer, 1864 [originally published in *Edinburgh Review*, 1846]), vol. 2, 366–7.
- 13 I refer here to the New Edition of 1851, in which a publisher’s “Notice” informs the reader that the reissue has not altered Chapters xlviii–liv. The history of Alexander is treated in Chapters XLVII–LII of volume 11 and in Chapters LIII–LV of volume 12. One can find extracts in P.P. Liddel, *Bishop Thirlwall’s History of Greece: A Selection Edited and Introduced* (Bristol: Phoenix Press, 2007).
- 14 Heeren, in his *A Manual of Ancient History, Particularly with regard to the Constitutions, the Commerce and the Colonies of the States of Antiquity*, translated from the German, 6th ed. (London: H.-G. Bohn, 1854), reprinted and revised without interruption in all European

in 1839–1840 with a very admiring foreword written by F.G. Welcker, the library director at the University of Bonn, who recounted all that Thirlwall's study offered the German public (1839, v–x). The French translation of the first two volumes by Adolphe Joanne, who also praised the exceptional value of the work, was published in 1847 and a second edition appeared in 1853. Joanne also noted the striking merits of the German scholars, but in a decidedly nationalist tone he judged them to be lacking in two essential qualities: "They knew nothing of the art of being clear; they don't know how to generalize" (1853, x). Joanne also considers Thirlwall to be far superior to both Gillies and Mitford; the latter, he claims, "has written a completely political work, [and his] judgment is always colored by his political prejudices." To back up these statements, Joanne cites the opinion of the well-known German historian, Fr. Schlosser, who believed that "Mitford wrote with the aim of denigrating all popular governments and praising all the tyrants" (in opposition to Abbé Barthélemy),<sup>15</sup> and was delighted that the German translation of Mitford was interrupted after the second volume in 1802 (which had also been the case for the French and German translations of Thirlwall). One finds the same praise in the translator's introduction by L. Schmitz<sup>16</sup> to Thirlwall's second volume (1840), and a similar repetition of the open polemic in England against

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languages since its first publication in 1799, writes in a bibliographical introduction that "the Germans are entitled to the merit of having first produced manuals, all of them useful, some excellent, in their kind; they are a result of the progress made in this science at the universities" (3). Nevertheless, on Alexander he considers the Sainte-Croix study, *Examen critique des anciens historiens d'Alexandre le Grand*, seconde édition considérablement augmentée (Paris: Imprimerie de Delance et Lesueur, 1804) as "the principal work" (173–4, 176). On the history of Greece presented in England and Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century, see the handy and well-informed presentation in C. Ampolo, *Storie greche. La formazione della moderna storiografia sugli antichi Greci* (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), 43–65. A. Momigliano's statement, in *George Grote and the Study of Greek History* (London: Lewis, 1952), 12, that "the study of Greek history had been almost unknown on the Continent before the end of the eighteenth century" remains incomprehensible to me (see along the same lines Macgregor Morris, "Navigating the Grotesque," 253).

- 15 F.C. Schlosser, *Universalhistorische Uebersicht der Geschichte der alten Welt und ihre Cultur*, Erster Teil, 2te Abtheilung (Frankfurt am Main: Warrentrap, 1826), 12 note k, 218 note k; Heeren, *Manual of Ancient History*, 141, also underlines the partiality of Mitford's work.
- 16 Of German origin, Leonard Schmitz moved to England in 1837. He translated Niebuhr's lectures into English while serving as "Rector of the High School of Edinburgh." See B.G. Niebuhr, *Lectures on Ancient History from the Earliest Times to the Taking of Alexandria by Octavianus, Comprising the History of Asiatic Nations, the Egyptians, Greek, Macedonians, and Carthaginians*, trans. Dr Leonard Schmitz, 3 vols. (London: Taylor, Walton and Maberly, 1852).

Mitford (viii). The translator remarks simply that this polemic “has perhaps less interest for Germany than for England where there are still thousands of readers of [Mitford’s] work which is considered a classic book (*ein classisches Buch*).”

Thirlwall was one of Grote’s close friends with whom he shared a common interest in German erudition and the same admiration for works about Antiquity published in Germany. (He had co-translated Niebuhr’s *Römische Geschichte*.) For all these reasons, it was impossible for Grote not to position his work in relation to the bishop’s. In the Preface to Volume I (1846, iii–iv), he praises Thirlwall’s *History of Greece* over Mitford’s while telling his readers that, “if Dr. Thirlwall’s *History of Greece* had appeared a few years sooner, [he] should probably never have conceived the design of the present work at all.”<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, though cited four times in Volume II, Thirlwall appears only once in Volume II within a detailed discussion of the site of Ecbatana (II, 244, note 1); and despite the open admiration in Volume I for his “early friend” (I, 1846, iv), Grote says nothing about the alternative vision developed by his “friend” six years earlier in a detailed assessment of the works of Alexander (I, 119–125).

Thirlwall is not the only predecessor to be treated with such little regard. Apart from the conclusion on the works of Alexander where Grote takes an explicit stand against the interpretations of Droysen whom he considers as a rival (345–369), he never takes the trouble to inform his readers about what texts he’s relying on, nor does he propose any inventory of the historiography on Alexander. The numerous footnotes give only a partial and limited answer. Most of them concern two subjects: military history and historical geography. About the first, he privileges quotations from the works of the Germans Rustow and Köchly (1852) and from the commentary of Quintus Curtius by Mützell (1841–43).<sup>18</sup> On the subject of historical geography, he refers mostly to the works of Ritter and to accounts of travelers, especially those of

17 Bulwer Lytton remains also courteously reserved in 1837. See E. Bulwer Lytton, *Athens: its Rise and Fall, with Views of the Literature, Philosophy and Social Life of the Athenian People*, Bicentenary edition, ed. O. Murray (London; New York: Routledge, 2004 [1834]), 38. A. Joanne notes the praise offered by Bulwer Lytton and Grote to illustrate the exceptional value of Thirlwall’s *History*. See Joanne, “Préface du traducteur,” in C. Thirlwall, *Histoire des origines de la Grèce ancienne*, trad. française par A. Joanne (Paris, 1852), xv. Joanne also refers the reader to favourable reviews that had appeared in English and German periodicals.

18 See for example the notes to page 73 sq. Mützell is quoted five times in Volume II. In the study by W. Rustow and H. Köchly, *Geschichte des griechischen Kriegswesens von den ältesten Zeit bis auf Pyrrhos, nach den Quellen bearbeitet* (Aarau: Verlags-Comptoir, 1852), Alexander’s conquests were analyzed in great detail (216–335).

traveling British spies who moved along the Indus Valley and throughout Persia and Central Asia in the first third of the nineteenth century (e.g., Morier, Malcolm, Kinneir, Elphinstone, Burnes, Rawlinson, etc.) as part of what is commonly called *The Great Game*.<sup>19</sup>

On the topic of Alexander's life itself, apart from Droysen's *Alexander*, Grote had access to the monograph by J. Williams (1829)<sup>20</sup> and to the specialized volumes of his friend Thirlwall, but he does not mention the older (and mediocre) monograph of Feßler (1797). None of the available books on Alexander are mentioned in the introduction, nor in the course of his study, except in discussions of details about military history (Droysen)<sup>21</sup> or about historical geography (Williams, Thirlwall, Droysen),<sup>22</sup> and in all instances they are treated as second-rate. Even when Grote evokes the voyage of Nearchus within his assessment of the battles and cites the book of William Vincent (1797), which had

19 Notes on historical geography are very frequent in the work of Robertson, Gillies and Thirlwall. Also in J. Williams, *The Life and Actions of Alexander the Great* (London, 1829), who was a specialist of this type of research. See Williams, *Two Essays on the Geography of Ancient Asia Intended Partly to Illustrate the Campaigns of Alexander and the Anabasis of Xenophon* (London: John Murray, 1829), and also in Droysen. On the work of Ritter, who taught Droysen in Berlin, see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 480–481 and 697–8, and also H.U. Wiemer, “Quellenkritik, historische Geographie und immanente Teleologie in Johann Gustav Droysens *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen*,” in S. Rebenich and H.-U. Wiemer, *Johann Gustav Droysen* (Frankfurt; New York: Campus Verlag, 2012), 105–113. These notes testify to the use of Alexander's sources by modern travelers, and at the same time to the use by historians of modern reports to precisely determine the geography of Alexander's campaigns. See, for example, J. Abbott, “Gradus ad Aornon,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 4 (1854): 310–363 and Grote's remark (*History*, vol. 12, 232 n. 1) about the itinerary followed by Alexander en route to Persepolis that cites John Macdonald Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire Accompanied by a Map* (London: John Murray, 1813). “No certainty is attainable, however, respecting the ancient geography of these regions. Mr. Long's Map of Ancient Persia shows how little can be made out.” See also Grote, *History*, vol. 12, 289 n. 4 (the Sogdiana campaign): “Our geographical knowledge does not enable us to verify these localities, or to follow Alexander in his marches in detail.” On British traveler-spies and their reports, see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 399–410 (map page 404; notes and bibliography pages 683–5).

20 A work often criticized by Thirlwall. On this subject see the remarks of E.A. Freeman, “Alexander the Great,” *Edinburgh Review* [1853] = *Historical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1873), 179 and note\*.

21 For example, Grote, *History*, vol. 11, 81 n. 1, 83 n. 3.

22 For example, Grote, *History*, vol. 11, 199 n. 1 (Williams), 244 n. 1 (Williams and Thirlwall about the site of Ecbatana), 257 n. 1 (Droysen and Thirlwall *inter alia*).

considerable influence in Europe, it is only mentioned once in a discussion of chronology (320, n. 2).<sup>23</sup>

Grote's chapters are much less explicit and therefore much less informative than Volumes VI and VII of Thirlwall. From the start (6, 162), Thirlwall concedes that the history of Alexander "might well form the subject of a separate work," and adds in a note that this task "has been handled admirably on the whole by Droysen."<sup>24</sup> Already cited (Droysen 1839) no less than eighteen times in the chapters devoted to the reign of Philip II, Droysen (1833 and 1836) is referred to four more times in Thirlwall's presentation of Alexander—most often very negatively on account of a partiality, judged incredible, in favor of Alexander and his crimes—while nonetheless making a point of praising the German historian's work as "excellent" (6, 353, n. 1). There are detailed footnotes that generally include the scholar's name, the work's title in abbreviated form, and the page reference. Grote, on the other hand, does not offer this biblio-historiographical information that would permit the reader to compare the source materials and the interpretations and allow for the possible refutation of his conclusions.<sup>25</sup>

He also sometimes borrows an interpretation or idea without mentioning his source. For example, when he writes that the Greek's position vis-à-vis Alexander can be compared to that of the German forces of the Rhine Confederation "which served in the grand army with which the Emperor Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812" (12, 69–70), one thinks immediately of a similar comparison that B.G. Niebuhr had systematically made in his lecture courses in Bonn between 1825 and 1830 which were published in 1847 (2, 446–7). It is known that the two historians had close relations and that in another instance Grote found it useful to support his argument with the help of Niebuhr.<sup>26</sup> Grote shared with Niebuhr a profoundly negative impression of the Macedonian conqueror, even if it was constructed on premises that were somewhat different.<sup>27</sup> It is true that the judgment of Napoleon by an Englishman like Grote was every bit as negative as that expressed by someone

23 On Vincent, see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 190–195, 386–410, 439–442, 472–474.

24 The rest of the note shows that he is at the same time perfectly aware of the prejudices of the German historian.

25 Droysen's way of quoting was itself very allusive. See Wiemer, "Quellenkritik," 139–140.

26 In a discussion of the famous passage in Livy about the (potential) superiority of the Roman armies faced with a (hypothetical) invasion by Alexander (9, 17–19), Grote declares: "I agree with Niebuhr in dissenting from Livy's result"; but he gives no bibliographical reference. It happens to be from Niebuhr, *Vorträge*, vol. 2, 503–505.

27 On the insertion of the Greco-Macedonian past and of Alexander into the contemporary German and European context, see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 462–469.



like Niebuhr who was convinced of Prussia's interests in the face of Napoleonic imperialism (cf. 12, 97, 359). The Macedonian conqueror and the French emperor were denounced together by both Grote and Niebuhr.

Having been already mentioned in the *Westminster Review* (1826, 281) for his research on Roman history (in opposition to Mitford who "has attempted no collation of the ancient authorities for himself"), Niebuhr is named again in the Preface to Grote's *History* (1, iv), along with Boeckh and O. Müller, as the best representatives of the German school of philology which has given European scholars "the inestimable aid of German erudition." Therefore one can understand why Grote frequently makes detailed and critical comments about earlier authors in long footnotes, and also about editions that comment upon these older authors—Arrian (Schmieder 1798) and Quintus Curtius (Mützell 1841–3). He presents and compares these different early commentaries, renders finally his judgment,<sup>28</sup> and/or combines elements originating in different sources.<sup>29</sup> Thirlwall also did this, but he would add to his heuristic reflections a lucid statement of regret such as: "Still a modern reader [...] had not the means of deciding for himself, [from] the discrepancies of [Arrian's] predecessors" (7, 200).

For a long time a decided preference for Arrian had become established within the historiography of Alexander.<sup>30</sup> Grote is much more critical, because he considers the author from Nicomedia to be too single-mindedly devoted to the memory of his hero (e.g., 12, 279, 288, 350, n. 1). That said, nowhere does Grote offer a comprehensive review of source material—something Mitford, a close friend of Sainte-Croix, did not neglect to do, however superficially.<sup>31</sup> It is very surprising that Grote makes almost no mention of Sainte-Croix's work on the sources about Alexander (1804). It is mentioned once concerning an insignificant detail (12, 199 n. 2);<sup>32</sup> whereas Droysen, for example, refers to it (albeit sometimes negatively) around twenty times.<sup>33</sup> This is all the more surprising since the French scholar had already developed a

28 For example, vol. 12, 267 n. 1, 268–269, on the trial of Philotas, on giving his preference to Aristobulus and Ptolemy (Arrian) about whom he yet suspects partiality; 275 n. 1 (massacre of the Branchidae), on explaining the silence of Arrian by the partiality of his sources.

29 See in particular 285 n. 1 (the Kleitos affair).

30 See Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 76–84, 103, 111–112, 131–132, etc.

31 See Mitford, *History of Greece*, vol. 5, 48<sup>10–13</sup>, concluding in a very optimistic way: "No part of ancient profane history has been transmitted more authenticated than that of Alexander."

32 Likewise in Thirlwall, *History of Greece*, vol. 6, 194 (the only reference).

33 See Wiemer, "Quellenkritik," 97–105.



very negative image of Alexander that prefigures to a certain extent the one that Grote would impose (or attempt to impose).<sup>34</sup> It is rather unbelievable that without saying so, Grote, the admirer of German philology, would follow the devastating (and totally inappropriate) judgment that Niebuhr had leveled against the *Examen critique*. Such a hypothesis is even less likely when one recalls that Niebuhr's view was not received favorably in Germany or anywhere else.<sup>35</sup> It is much more probable that Grote simply kept silence about the *Examen critique*—just as he did about other publications that he had most certainly consulted and used over the course of his research and his own writing.

### The History of Alexander and the History of Ancient Greece

Volume 18 of the French translation of Grote's *History* (Paris 1867) is exclusively devoted to the Macedonian conquest.<sup>36</sup> But this alters the direction given by Grote himself to his project. The British historian did not want to write a monograph on Alexander. The reign of the conqueror is set within a comprehensive history that transcends the personality and achievements of the son of Philip. Even if it was a delicate matter to decide when exactly Greek history begins (I, vii–ix), the task is made even harder when one has to designate its end. Grote concludes his Volume 12 by explaining to his readers why he has brought them to this point, i.e., c. 300 BCE.

I have now brought down the history of Greece to the point of time marked out in the Preface to my First Volume—the close of the generation contemporary with Alexander—the epoch, from whence dates not only the extinction of Grecian political freedom and self-action, but also the decay of productive genius, and the debasement of that consummate literary and rhetorical excellence which the fourth century B.C. had seen exhibited in Plato and Demosthenes (12, 661).

34 On the works of Sainte-Croix and their influence, see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 125–172, 421–454.

35 Niebuhr, *Vorträge*, vol. 2, 423; on this point see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 464, 693 n. 22. On the English translation of Sainte-Croix's *Examen* in a 1775 edition that provoked a vitriolic review by W. Vincent in 1793 largely due to immediate political circumstances (the French Revolution), see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 164–165.

36 It was otherwise in the German edition where the contents of Volume 6 (Leipzig, 1856) reproduced exactly the contents of Volume 12 of the English edition.

These sentences correspond exactly to the program announced by the author in his Preface (1, 1846, ix): “After the generation of Alexander, the political action of Greece becomes cramped and degraded—no longer interesting to the reader, or operative on the destinies of the future world.” Grote had repeated this at the end of the preceding volume (11, 716–721) in his assessment of the reign of Philip II, described as “the destroyer of freedom and independence in the Hellenic world.” During his reign and that of his successor, Grote adds, “the once stirring politics of Greece, after one feeble effort, sink yet lower, into the nullity of a subject province” (11, 721).

At the very beginning of Volume 12 (67–71), Grote makes a somewhat paradoxical statement, that “the Asiatic conquests of Alexander do not belong directly and literally to the province of an historian of Greece.” It’s true these were conquests accomplished by Macedonian leaders and soldiers: “Hellas, as a political aggregate, has now ceased to exist, except in so far as Alexander employs the name for his own purposes.” If the history of Alexander fits within a *History of Greece*, it’s because there were Greek soldiers in the two armies, and the expedition accomplished the Greek’s dream, namely to take revenge against the Persians (even if Grote considers it pure illusion). Moreover, even though far from the sentiments of free Greeks with a civic community, Alexander was able sometimes to show he shared with them a common memory, such as when he pays homage to the heroes of the Trojan War (12, 94–96).

The longer the conquest lasts and the more the army moves away from the Aegean coastlines, the less it belongs to a history of Greece. If, during the first four years the military operations had direct consequences “on the condition and destinies of the Greek cities,” things were far different starting in 331–330 BCE with the control of lands as far away as Afghanistan and the banks of the Indus. Hence Grote’s remark at this point:

To the historian of Greece, therefore, these latter campaigns can hardly be regarded as included within the range of his subject. They deserve to be told as examples of military energy, and as illustrating the character of the most illustrious general of antiquity—one who, though not a Greek, had become the master of the Greeks. But I shall not think it necessary to recount them in any detail, like the battles of Issus and Arbela (243–4).

Grote pursues his history of Greece up to the disappearance of the first generation of Alexander’s successors. He concludes with a description and apocalyptic analysis, and explains why he is ending his *History of Greece* at this point:

The spirit of the Greeks was broken, and their habits of combined sentiment and action had disappeared. [...] I have pursued the history into

that gulf of Grecian nullity which marks the succeeding centuries. [...] An historian accustomed to the Grecian world as described by Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, feels that the life has departed from his subject, and with sadness and humiliation brings his narrative to a close (12, 526–530).

But in fact the evils the author describes at the beginning of the Antigonid dynasty already existed earlier, and the developments that one can observe are only the extension of an earlier evolution: “The freedom of Hellas, the life and soul of this history from its commencement, disappeared completely during the first years of Alexander’s reign” (12, 528).

It’s safe to say that Grote as a historian of Greece was rather uncomfortable with the figure of Alexander. Was it really necessary then to devote hundreds of pages to an exhaustive retelling of the military campaigns of a conquest whose chronological unfolding was already well known,<sup>37</sup> and which he himself said fell mostly outside the primary focus of his research and reflections? The explanations and justifications given by Grote are not always clear or coherent.<sup>38</sup>

It should be pointed out that Grote was not the first to feel and give expression to this difficulty.<sup>39</sup> For a century, from Rollin to Niebuhr, most historians had lamented the decadence and values of the Greek cities that declined much more quickly with the emergence of Philip and following the Asian conquests of Alexander. Why take up Alexander then if everyone is in agreement that the end of the Greek cities occurs even before that conquest? Only Temple Stanyan (1739) remained entirely logical in his decision to exclude Alexander from his

37 As early as 1697 (*Dictionnaire historique et critique*, s.v. “Macédoine, Alexandre de”), Pierre Bayle affirms: “Il n’y a rien de plus connu à toutes sortes de lecteurs que l’histoire d’Alexandre” [“There is nothing better known to all sorts of readers than the history of Alexander”]; and since then had there not been many erudite narratives published in all the countries of Europe, including recently by Droysen and Thirlwall? Indeed it’s by arguing that “the history [of Alexander] is pretty generally known” that Donne (W.B. Donne, “Grote on Alexander the Great,” *National Review* 3 (1856): 57) justifies his decision “not to abridge or to discuss minutely Mr. Grote’s account of Alexander.”

38 Compare with the explanations given to present in great detail the adventures of the Ten Thousand under the command of Cyrus the Younger: “This incident, lying apart from the main stream of Grecian affairs, would form an item, strictly speaking, in Persian history rather in Grecian. But its effects on the Greek mind, and upon the future course of Grecian affairs, were numerous and important” (Grote, vol. 9, ed. 1859: 1).

39 On this point see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, chap. 15 (*Alexandre, et après?*), in particular pages 489–493 (“Histoire grecque et histoire d’Alexandre”), where Grote is situated within a long line of historians faced with the same difficulty.

*Grecian History* since he considered that the conquests were not properly Greek but a part of Asian and Macedonian history. All others down to E. Curtius and his *Griechische Geschichte* (1st edition, 1857–67) succumbed to the temptation to retell the conquest down to the smallest details, both to denounce Alexander and to underline that his enterprise only served to accelerate the already irremediable decadence that had overtaken the Greek cities.

It's worth returning to the particularly interesting case of Thirlwall, who had decided to extend his *History of Greece* until 146 BCE, the year of the Roman conquest of Greece. Thirlwall's final volume was published in 1844. About the inclusion of Alexander, he explains his position in a paragraph that opens with a reference to Droysen (1833): "Alexander's invasion of Asia might well form the subject of a separate work." Then Thirlwall announces, just as Grote will do, that he won't treat the question "with all the fullness of details into which [he has] entered in other parts of the history of Greece." He will merely relate the major facts of this "memorable conquest." But this can only be understood as preterition since he then launches into a four hundred-page narrative! If he has finally decided to write about the Alexandrian conquest, he adds, it's because he sees no reason not to follow the example of "writers of Grecian history" who have preceded him. What's more, and it's the fundamental difference between him and Grote, Thirlwall announces from the start that although it was led by a Macedonian, he believes the conquest had some positive aspects for Greece itself, because "[it] spread a Greek population over the fairest provinces of Asia." Without being naïve, Thirlwall also knows that Europe "was treated as a province of the Persian Empire" (7, 125), but he refuses to limit his focus to the conquest's deplorable consequences for Greece. He prefers instead to study the conquest on its own terms, "to understand the spirit in which it was accomplished, and perhaps to judge of the designs as well as the achievements of the conqueror." Fending off with equal vigor the hostile prejudices of Sainte-Croix and the favorable views of Droysen (6, 162, n. 1), he can carry out his project without internal contradictions or recourse to tortuous explanations. Alexander's conquest may have been generally considered as a post-script to Greek history, but it merits examination on its own by "writers of Grecian history." Even more importantly, Thirlwall enlarges the traditional perspective by declaring that the history of Alexander "belongs rather to universal history than to the history of Greece." This was exactly the position defended thirty years earlier by the French historian Pierre-Charles Levesque,<sup>40</sup> and more recently by Droysen.

40 Levesque, *Études de l'histoire ancienne et de celle de la Grèce*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1811) 385. "The celebrity of Alexander leads us to want to extend the narrative of his exploits more than they ought to be in a history of Greece; they are partly foreign to it; but they are valuable

Though he shared (silently) what Thirlwall calls the hostile prejudices of Sainte-Croix, Grote is unable to follow the example of his “early friend,” and for this reason the reader has difficulty understanding why Grote also devotes four hundred pages to an event that for him falls outside of Greek history. Is not the explanation simply an agonistic desire to confront his competitors, the one recognized as such (Droysen) and the other hidden behind an obsessive silence (Thirlwall)?

### Assessing a Conquest: War and Peace

Contrary to predecessors like Mitford and Williams, who, as a conclusion, were content to quote extensively from Arrian’s eulogy of Alexander, but in conformity with a practice that goes back at least to Rollin, Grote devotes a tightly composed analysis to Alexander’s reign and conquests (12, 347–369). It is during this presentation that he announces his opposition to Droysen (1833, 1836, 1842), whom he places “among other eulogists of Alexander” who go unnamed (357, n. 2).<sup>41</sup> Who are they? Mitford is probably among them,<sup>42</sup> but the circle is no doubt larger—Robertson? Gillies? Vincent? It is difficult to imagine that Grote is not also thinking of Thirlwall, who, some years earlier, had also written up an assessment of the grand enterprise of the young Macedon king (7, 119–125) that opened with statements that Grote could only have disagreed with. Thirlwall presented Alexander as “one of the greatest sons of the earth” driven by “the desire of knowledge and the love of good.

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because they belong to the history of the world. We will, however, omit many details that we would not otherwise be permitted to leave out were our specific aim to write a life of the conqueror.”

- 41 On Grote vs. Droysen, see the valuable remarks by Demetriou, “Historians on Alexander the Great and Macedonian Imperialism,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 19.1 (2001): 23–60, and Ph. Vasunia, “Alexander and Asia: Droysen and Grote,” in *Memory as History: The Legacy of Alexander in Asia*, ed. H. Prabha and D. Potts (New Delhi, 2007), 89–102, returned to in Ph. Vasunia, “Two Visions of Empire: Droysen and Grote,” in *The Classics and Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36–51, and W. Nippel, “Droysen in internationaler Perspektive,” in K. Ries (Hg.), *Johann Gustav Droysen. Facetten eines Historikers* (Pallas Athene-34), F. Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart: 2010, 200–211 (“Athen und Alexander der Grosse: Droysen und George Grote”). See also the article by P. Roget, “Historiens allemands contemporains. Jean-Gustave Droysen, Histoire de l’Hellénisme,” *Revue germanique* 29, 32 (1864; 1867), 1867): 87–92.
- 42 The positions of Mitford are well-summarized in the words of a writing assignment given to pupils based on his manual: “Point out the peculiar excellence of Alexander’s arrangements, civil and military, for establishing harmony throughout his extensive dominions” (Major, *Questions*, 270).

In a word, great as one of the benefactors of this kind." No doubt this is why a biographer has written that "nowhere do Grote and Thirlwall differ more widely than in their treatment of Alexander."<sup>43</sup> This statement is accurate on the whole, but the full truth is more complex.

The first part of Grote's assessment concerns military affairs, and it is overall quite positive. He exalts "the transcendent merits of Alexander as a soldier and a general. [He] overwhelms the imagination more than any other personage of antiquity, by the matchless development of all that constitutes effective force—as an individual warrior, and as organizer and leader of armed masses" (12, 351–2). Grote repeats here what he had already written in the introduction (12, 71–72) and throughout the narrative: "His strategic combinations [...] are without parallel in ancient history... [His is] the most signal example recorded in antiquity, of military genius and sagacious combination" (12, 228). It is around this single aspect of the king's personality that Grote is willing to say he was "epoch-making" (12, 71). But this praise is not without reservations. First, Alexander gives in to "a courage sometimes indeed both excessive and unreasonable." Grote also condemns the war's brutality and the repression in both Gaza and in India, such that in his estimation the king had lumped together as enemies "all mankind, known and unknown, except those who chose to submit to him" (12, 352). Finally our author repeats several times another serious criticism of Alexander's own merit. If his military genius is undeniable, he still owes his victories to others beside himself. First, to his father who was also characterized as "an organizing genius" (11, 396) and who built the army that Alexander leads into Asia (11, 718; 11, 71–90). Secondly, to the Persian satraps and generals none of whom were capable of "courage and loyalty" (12, 120), and even more to Darius III, whom Grote continuously denounces as cowardly and incapable of action, as is evidenced twice publicly at Issos (12, 163–4, 170–2) and at Arbela (12, 226–8, 249). And yet, adds Grote, had the Persians known how to use (Greek!) mercenaries intelligently, "they well might have maintained their empire even against such an enemy as Alexander" (12, 256).

The first part of this assessment is extremely traditional, whether directed at Alexander or Darius. While remaining critical of the conqueror, Rollin had no difficulty praising his shining military virtues (Book XV, xix.1), and one finds in Grote (12, 353) traits that had already been underlined a century earlier by the moralizing Christian histories that considered Alexander gave in to "temerity" and boundless ambition. As for the cowardice of Darius, it had become a sort of established truism across virtually the entire ancient and

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43 J.-C. Thirlwall, Jr., *Connop Thirlwall, Historian and Theologian* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: MacMillan, 1936), 103.

modern-historiography.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Grote does not insist on the psychology of the king. For example, he gives no credence to the ancient or modern commentaries about the alleged sexual excesses of Alexander (12, 208, n. 1). Moreover, in contrast to a rule followed by all predecessors since Bossuet and Rollin (down to Thirlwall and Droysen),<sup>45</sup> Grote did not think it necessary to devote an introductory chapter to a presentation of the Persian Empire. Nevertheless, the characteristics he attributes to it over the course of his narrative are not substantially different from the most common European conceptions, namely the insistence on the decadence of a “colossus with feet of clay” torn by divisiveness and weakened by its declining military capacity. Not only does Grote denounce Darius III without making any concessions,<sup>46</sup> he extends his criticism to all of the Persian kings with the exception of Cyrus the founder (12, 321). The victories of Alexander had already been introduced at the beginning of chapter XLIV of Volume 5 where Grote recounted the victories of the Greeks and Athenians in 480–479 BCE, declaring there that one hundred and fifty years later, the faults of Darius III resembled “the imbecility, cowardice, and credulous rashness of Xerxes.”

Neither Droysen nor Thirlwall present a military assessment of Alexander; instead each devotes a general conclusion to what one might call peace projects, in other words the measures taken by the king to organize his empire over the long term. This presentation style imitates an early model that can be found in Gillies.<sup>47</sup> These aspects also take up the rest of Grote's conclusion, but in overt opposition to Droysen and other “eulogists” of the Macedon king. Droysen had especially underlined Alexander's will to administer his empire,

44 On these various points see Briant, *Darius*; Briant, “La tradition gréco-romaine sur Alexandre le Grand dans l'Europe moderne et contemporaine,” in *The Impact of Classical Greece on European and National Identities*, ed. M. Hagsma et al. (Amsterdam: Gieben, 2003), 161–180; Briant, “Montesquieu, Mably et Alexandre le Grand: aux sources de l'histoire hellénistique,” *Revue Montesquieu* 8 (2005–6): 151–185; Briant, “La démolition du héros à l'antique,” chap. 7 in *Alexandre des Lumières*.

45 J.-G. Droysen, *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen* (Berlin: Fincke, 1833), 17–33; C. Thirlwall, *History*, vol. 6, chap. 48; on this habit see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 51–53, and all of chap. 16, “*Alexandre, l'Europe et l'Orient immobile*.”

46 On the two portraits of Darius in the literature and historiography, see Briant, *Darius*, 85–130.

47 See J. Gillies, *History of the World* (London: Strahan, 1807), vol. 1, 1–37, 178–202. The author underlines that the administrative and organizational work of Alexander has regularly been neglected “by historians and philosophers of Europe” (3); and yet he later writes: “Of his exertions to make the empire flourish in resources, there is everywhere abundant attestation” (34).



to develop commerce and trade by establishing the circulation of Persian treasures.<sup>48</sup> These points are repeated by Thirlwall who considers that “the main object undoubtedly was to found a solid and flourishing empire,” and to bring improvements to the population’s situation overall such as the construction of a route between the Indus and Europe via the Euphrates thanks to the destruction of the barrages or *katarraktai* erected by the Persians across the Babylonian rivers.<sup>49</sup> In this way the empire of Alexander was “the first of the great monarchies founded in Asia, that opened a prospect of progressive movement, and not continual degradation to its subjects.”

In opposition to the authors referred to anonymously who “give [Alexander] credit for grand and beneficent views of the subject of imperial government, and for intentions highly favourable for the improvement of mankind,” Grote declares that he “sees no ground for adopting this opinion.” He believes that Alexander dreamed only of conquering and conquering again, without any concern for administration, even in the last years, and even if he had lived longer. In fact, his only aim was to leave intact the Persian Empire he had conquered, without changing anything about the resulting organization—in short to conserve “the condition of Asiatic empire in all ages,” only introducing a military organization that conformed to the Macedon model. He admits that “the best of all effects of these conquests [was] a great increase of intercommunication, multiplication of roads, extension of commercial dealing, and enlarged facilities for the acquisition of geographical knowledge.” This, he concludes (368), is “the main feature [...] which presents itself as promising real consequences beneficial to humanity.” It is true that the expansion of geographic knowledge and the opening of new maritime routes through the Persian Gulf and Babylonia were two positive traits that all commentaries

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48 See Briant, “Alexandre ‘grand économiste’ : mythe, histoire, historiographie,” *Annuaire du Collège de France* (2004–5): 585–599; Briant, “The Empire of Darius in Perspective,” in *Alexander the Great: A Reader*, 2nd edition, ed. I. Worthington (2012), 165–195 (first published in *Alexander the Great: A New History*, ed. W. Heckel and L.A. Tritle [New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], 176–178).

49 I have reviewed elsewhere the debates about the *katarraktai* on the Tigris and their significance within the historiography: see Briant, “Retour sur Alexandre et les *katarraktes* du Tigre: l’histoire d’un dossier (Première partie),” *Studi Ellenistici* 19 (2006): 10–75 (32–62); Briant, “Retour sur Alexandre et les *katarraktes* du Tigre: l’histoire d’un dossier (Suite et fin),” *Studi Ellenistici* 20 (2008): 155–218; Briant, *Alexander the Great and His Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 89–96; Id., “The *katarraktai* of the Tigris: Irrigation-works, commerce and shipping in Elam and Babylonia from Darius to Alexander,” in *Kings, Countries and Peoples* (Achaemenid History, XVI), Leiden (forthcoming), Chapter 28.

accepted since the time of Montesquieu and his British followers.<sup>50</sup> Grote mostly goes along with this position, but with reservations that put into question the novelty of Alexander's initiatives. To do this, he makes sure to point out that the Persian Empire was already supplied with a road network, and that the navigational chart or *periplus* of Skylax that dates from the time of Darius I qualifies somewhat the modernity (then admitted) of Nearchos.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, to his mind, these developments are not the effects of a policy deliberately elaborated and applied by Alexander. Unlike Droysen and Thirlwall, he avoids taking part in the strategic debate about the *katarraktai* (which risked weakening his position). And in contrast to Thirlwall (who had adopted the hardly original theory of Droysen), Grote avoids discussing the beneficial effects of putting Persian treasures into circulation.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, the opposition between Grote and Thirlwall is not absolute, for the simple reason that the latter has a very flexible approach free of all prejudices (cf. 6, 162, n. 1). He has read Droysen with admiration, but he does not adhere to all of his positions and does not hesitate to frequently denounce his partiality. While underlining the positive consequences of the conquests, the bishop is much more reserved about the king's administrative talents. He can detect "no hint of any political institutions framed to secure the future welfare of his subjects." Therefore, Alexander was certainly not a "Lawgiver."

50 On this point see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 58–63, 330–354, 386–392.

51 Grote recognizes that "the voyage [...] performed by Nearchus [...] was in those days a splendid maritime achievement" (12, 368 and n. 2), but the expression "in those days" seems to echo a reservation made by the reviewer of Mitford's vol. 5 in the *Quarterly Review* (1821): 167 on the (contested) "modernity" of the voyage of Nearchus as underlined by Vincent (cf. Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 410).

52 On Grote and the *katarraktes*: Briant, "Alexandre et l'hellénisation de l'Asie": l'histoire au passé et au présent," *Studi Ellenistici* 16 (2005): 25, 32; Briant, "Retour sur Alexandre," 20:156–7; Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 366–371, 678–9. On putting treasure into circulation: Grote obviously mentions the capture of treasure in the course of his narrative (12, 237–239, with a long and interesting note of a historiographical character), but he nowhere introduces the relation established by Droysen between the striking of money and the subsequent impulse given to commerce. As I explain elsewhere (Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 550–556), the idea was in the air long before Droysen. One need only cite a passage from Linguet's *Siècle d'Alexandre* (S.-N.-H. Linguet, *Histoire du Siècle d'Alexandre, avec quelques réflexions sur ceux qui l'ont précédé* [Amsterdam, 1762], 7–8): "Alors il se fit dans la moitié du globe une révolution prodigieuse. Les richesses de Suse et de Persépolis transportées en Europe y causèrent un changement rapide. L'intérêt, la politique la lièrent à l'Asie, et ces liens une fois formées ne furent plus rompus" ["There occurred then a prodigious revolution across half the globe. The riches of Susa and Persepolis transported to Europe provoked rapid change there. Interests and politics linked it to Asia, and these links once made would never be broken"].

Thirlwall precedes Grote in observing that the former Persian modes of governing remained intact. Also, in a very pragmatic way, he observes that “Alexander assumed, *as perhaps was necessary*, the fullness of despotic sovereignty that had been exercised by his predecessors” (7, 124–5, emphasis added).

### Assessing of a Conquest: Hellenisation vs. Asiatization

The heart of Grote’s criticisms of Droysen, this time made explicitly (12, 357, n. 2), concerned the relations established between the conquerors and the conquered populations.<sup>53</sup> He vigorously condemns the thesis that considers Alexander to be the conscious instrument for the diffusion of Greek culture. His counterargument is put forward in stages. Grote first questions the theses defended by Droysen in *Alexander* (1833), and then extends these criticisms to the *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (1836, 1843).

Alexander’s adoption of Persian governing techniques ought not to be attributed simply to his lack of interest in administration. In truth, the new master of the empire “was neither Macedonian nor Greek.” One can even say, Grote affirms, that “he became more Persian than either Macedonian or Greek.” Having no national feelings, he felt comfortable with an empire that was nothing but “a miscellaneous aggregate, with no strong feeling of nationality.” Like all his predecessors, Grote’s narrative points out along the way the notable stages in Alexander’s evolution: the “barbarity” of his behavior toward Batis in Gaza (12, 197), then his conscious desire “to feel and act manifestly as successor of Darius on the Persian throne [and] to disdain the comparative simplicity of Macedonian habits” (12, 254); the affair of Philotas and Permenion also reveals “how much we have passed out of the region of Greek civic feeling into that of the more savage Illyrian warrior, partially orientalised” (12, 270); the tortures inflicted at Bessos are “altogether Oriental and non-Hellenic” (12, 279); then with the passing of years, “the Oriental temper [...] displayed itself more forcibly than ever” (12, 290, the marriage with Roxana and the affair of *proskynesis*), such that “all his worst qualities had been developed by unparalleled success and by Asiatic example” (12, 293). How then, in these conditions, could one,

53 On this part, besides Demetriou, “Bishop Connop Thirlwall: Historian of Ancient Greece,” *Quaderni di storia* 56 (2002): 49–41, and Vasunia, “Alexander and Asia,” and *Classics and Colonial India*, I refer the reader to my special study of 2005 (Briant, “‘Alexandre et l’hellénisation de l’Asie’”), where I review the debates about *Hellenization* among Niebuhr, Droysen (13–18), Thirlwall and Grote (18–27) within a European context from the eighteenth century to the early twenty-first century.

like Droysen, call him “a son of Hellas [...] bent on the systematic diffusion of Hellenic culture for the improvement of mankind” (12, 357)? His politics had more the effect of lowering the Greeks to the level of the Asians. In short, “instead of hellenizing Asia, he was tending to asiatize Macedonia and Hellas” (12, 359). As a way of completing his demonstration, Grote picks apart the study that Droysen had devoted specifically to Alexander’s foundations (1843, 591–651) and those of his successors (651–756). He considers that most of those attributed to Alexander were in fact the work of his successors (12, 360, n. 1), and that the majority were nothing more than military posts and garrisons responsible for maintaining order. Grote’s conclusion: “The purpose of colonization was altogether subordinate; and that of Hellenizing Asia, so far as we can see, was not even contemplated, much less realized” (12, 362–3).

Taking the period that follows Alexander as a perspective-giving yardstick, Grote cautions his readers about the term *Hellenismus* coined by Droysen, a term that must be distinguished from what Grote calls *Hellenism* which for him means all the Greek customs, thoughts, practices, and values during the autonomous period: i.e., the time of Sophocles, Thucydides, and Socrates (12, 363, n. 2; 366).<sup>54</sup> According to this sense of the term *Hellenism*, there never was Hellenisation, because “this genuine Hellenism could not subsist under the overruling compression of Alexander, nor even under the less irresistible pressure of his successors. [...] All that passed into Asia was a faint and partial resemblance of it” (12, 364). Grote also calls it “an exterior varnish of Hellenism” (12, 118). Certainly the Greek and Macedonian colonists kept a controlling hand on the cities (without having the rights of citizens), and they imposed their language. But the consequences of the spread of Greek ought not to be overestimated: “After all, the hellenized Asiatic was not so much a Greek as a foreigner with Grecian speech, exterior varnish, and superficial manifestations.” As for the Greeks, “they became themselves substantially orientalized,” and they were destined “[to be] absorbed into an immense Asiatic aggregate” (12, 365–6; 360). Alexander preferred relying on “the servile Asiatic sentiment and custom” (12, 359).

What is striking with Grote, as in the writings of all his predecessors, are the numerous references to an irreducible cultural opposition between Europe and the Orient. Like all his contemporaries, he doesn’t hesitate to compare the

54 See R. Bichler, “*Hellenismus*.” *Geschichte und Problematik eines Epochenbegriffs* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 50–51; Bichler, “Droysens Hellenismus-Konzept. Seine Problematik und seine faszinierende Wirkung,” in S. Rebenich and H.U. Wiemer (Hg.), *Johann Gustav Droysen*, 189–238.

Persian Empire to the Ottoman Empire of his time (5, 1859 edition, 240).<sup>55</sup> In his eyes, the march of the Ten Thousand already constituted “an illustration of Hellenic character and competence, measured against that of contemporary Asiatics” (9, 1859 edition, 2). And the opposition he constructs between the expedition of Xerxes in Greece and the expedition of Alexander in Asia leads him to contrast “the progressive spirit of Greece, serving as herald and stimulus to the like spirit in Europe, with the stationary mind of Asia, occasionally roused by some splendid individual, but never appropriating to itself new social ideas and powers, either for war or for peace” (5, 1859 edition, 241). This “splendid individual” is most certainly Cyrus the Younger, who, if he had won at Cunaxa, “would have acquired under his hand such a degree of strength as might probably have enabled him to forestall the work afterwards performed by the Macedonian kings, and to make the Greeks in Europe as well as those in Asia his dependents” (9, 51). One understands from this Grote’s skepticism about a politics of Hellenisation that would come via a colonisation-policy: “No Greek thinker believed the Asiatics to be capable of that free civil polity upon which the march of every community was based” (12, 358–9).<sup>56</sup>

On this point Thirlwall’s judgment is once again more balanced (12, 121–5). While granting the possible counterarguments, he aligns himself for the most part (though not explicitly) with Droysen, and considers that, thanks to new cities, Greek civilization was able to spread out in all directions in concentric circles. Indeed, the idea of Alexander was “to elevate the intellectual and moral character of the people. [...] He must have foreseen that from each of his new colonies, the language, arts, and manners, the whole genius of Greece would radiate through the adjacent regions and would gradually enlighten, civilize, and transform, their population.” In conformity with a tendency that is absolutely constant in all European thinking about Alexander, Thirlwall makes an explicit link between Europe’s past and present: “And we, who owe so much of what is best among us to the same culture, can hardly charge him with blind

55 On the identification between the Persian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières: fragments d'histoire européenne* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), *L'Homme malade de l'Asie*, 529–541.

56 According to Vasunia, “Alexander and Asia” and *The Classics and Colonial India*, because of the explicit reference to Burke and the policy he envisioned for British India, these statements could also find their place, even in an allusive way, within a contemporary debate on British colonial policy. See also the remark of Demetriou, “Historians on Macedonian Imperialism,” 47–48. (On the use of the figure and policy of Alexander in British colonial debates around 1800–1820, see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 410–420: “*Maintien des coutumes locales ou assimilation? Plutarque et Alexandre dans les débats impériaux britanniques.*”)

partiality. We must rather admire the greatness of his mind" (6, 123). This thought comes to him while discussing the policy that he calls "interfusion" between Greeks and barbarians. As to whether these changes brought only good, nothing is less certain. It is not impossible that these new forms were but "empty varnish or spiritless imitation." After uttering these doubts, Thirlwall does not pronounce a verdict. However, he strongly opposes the idea (from Droysen) that the conquest led to a happy combination "between the religions and mythologies of Greece and Asia." This was certainly not Alexander's idea, and therefore "it seems false to represent him in its account as the Precursor of a better Light" (12, 123–4). This was an aspect of things that Grote did not consider worth going into, even though it had been the subject of numerous reflections at least since Bossuet and Rollin, even before Droysen but forward (in a way far less original than is generally thought) that *Hellenismus* paved the way to Christianity.<sup>57</sup>

### Grote's Alexander Against the Background of Historiographic "longue durée"

The first consequence of Grote's publication was the near immediate forgetting of Mitford's *History*—which was precisely his aim.<sup>58</sup> In a defense that he wrote in 1829 in his brother's favor, Lord Redesdale explained that "if either Philip or Alexander, or both, have been represented in history in too favorable a light, let it also be considered how much they have been maligned by others; and how difficult it is, in refuting malignity, to avoid the semblance of partiality to the person vindicated" (1838, XLII). If he had lived long enough, Lord Redesdale could have made the same statement after the publication of Grote's Volume 12 in 1856 when one considers how strongly opposed the two positions remained as soon as they touched on a judgment of Alexander and the short, medium, and long-term consequences of his conquests.

57 On this see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 503–512. According to Demetriou, "Historians on Macedonian Imperialism," 47, "Grote, not unlike other utilitarians, believed that Christianity was hostile to the well-being and intellectual progress of humanity."

58 It is not my intention here to consider at length the reception of Grote's *History* in its entirety. Such a project would go far beyond the limits of the subject I am analyzing. (See, for example, Demetriou, *George Grote on Plato and Athenian Democracy: A Study in Classical Reception* (Peter Lang, 1999), chapter 9: *The Reception of Grote*.) I am focusing on the reception of Grote's Alexander, though this is not my sole subject which would suppose studying in parallel the reception of Droysen's *Alexander* about which there have been some good recent studies; e.g., Nippel, "Droysen" and S. Rebenich, "Zur Droysen-Rezeption in der Alten Geschichte," in S. Rebenich and H.U. Wiemer, *Johann Gustav Droysen, Philosophie und Politik—Historie und Philosophie*.



Thirlwall was another collateral victim, but he didn't seem to be offended by it. He even congratulated Grote, and refused to revise the last chapters of his own book, including those on the history of Alexander.<sup>59</sup> The fact remains: Grote's refusal to explicitly discuss the positions of his old friend, in contrast to what he accepted to do when it came to Droysen, certainly contributed to the general discounting and forgetting of just how extremely new and different Thirlwall's *History* was.<sup>60</sup> The effect was similar to how in Germany the writings of Droysen and the other Berlin academics caused the no less sudden erasure from memory of the considerable contribution of Heeren and his colleagues from the Göttingen school (e.g., Heyne).<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, even if the bishop's work was required to yield ground with the publication of each new volume of Grote's history, the theses he defended remained alive, for the simple reason that they were not his own. If some commentators in Great Britain adopted without discussion Grote's positions on Alexander (e.g., Jacox 1856; Smith 1856, 101–4), others attempted to balance things out by juxtaposing the calm and dispassionate method of Thirlwall with Grote's often partial commitment. In 1856, W.D. Donne confessed his disappointment upon reading Volumes 11 and 12 of Grote, and declared that both Grote's *History* and Thirlwall's deserved to be side by side in every good library. But this was far from being the case.<sup>62</sup> He considers that "[Thirlwall's] account of Alexander is not only the most finished portion of his own narrative, but also one of the most accurate and animated historical compositions of the present day" (55). He stakes out his opposition to the major theses of Grote, in particular to the idea that the Greeks were degraded to the level of the Asians (61), and also to the idea that attributes to the Successors a policy ("diffusing Greek civilization over Asia") that, in fact, had already been defined and applied by Alexander (66). In conclusion, Donne does not believe that the publication of Grote's Volume 12 offers the definitive and final word. On

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59 J.-C. Thirlwall, Jr., *Connop Thirlwall*, 106–7.

60 On the works of Thirlwall and their innovative character, see Demetriou, *George Grote*, 51–56 ("the most decisive revolution in Greek historiography prior to Grote") and Demetriou, "Bishop Connop Thirlwall," 77 ("The struggle between the Greeks and the Macedonians is one of the most interesting and balanced accounts in nineteenth-century historiography"). See also Liddel, *Bishop Thirlwall's History*, xiv–xxviii.

61 On Heyne's Alexander, see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 455–461, 692–3. On the political opposition between Heeren and Droysen (through their visions of Alexander), see *Alexandre des Lumières* 564–6 and 713 nn. 7–10.

62 See Demetriou, "Bishop Connop Thirlwall," 87: "It soon afterwards [1852] disappeared under the heavy storm of Grote's twelve-volume apparatus, and has since remained unread on the shelves of libraries."



the contrary, he hopes that the day will come when “the history of Alexander [will] be written by some one who will hold the balance even between the fanatical applause of Droysen and Flathe, and the little less fanatical detraction of Mr. Grote” (73)—which is exactly what Thirlwall had proposed to do by stating his disapproval of the prejudices of both Droysen and Sainte-Croix (6, 162, n. 1). And it’s understandable that Thirlwall’s work would continue to be regularly cited in the historical literature alongside Grote.<sup>63</sup>

For his part, E.A. Freeman admitted to preferring Grote, both on the subject of Athens and Greece. Overall, he tends to give each *History* an equal standing, even while adding “till some one arises who can place both alike into the shade” (1856, 141). Then he completely changes tone in his assessment of Volumes 11 and 12. Grote, he writes, is “far inferior to his predecessor Thirlwall.” The reason is not simply that these chapters of the bishop are the best of his *History*, it is also because Grote develops a partisan history that prevents him from appreciating the merits of Athens’s enemy. From that perspective, Alexander is reduced to being “a vulgar destroyer, a mere slaughterer of men.” In reality, contrary to what Grote affirms, Alexander truly had the idea of spreading Greek civilization to Asia, and he founded numerous colonies with that purpose (1856, 170–172).

In an issue of the *Edinburgh Review* for 1857, Freeman returns to the question in an essay devoted specifically to Grote’s Alexander. There he presents a detailed inventory of his disagreements. He doesn’t neglect to praise Grote, at least by distinguishing the latter’s Alexander from the portrait offered by Niebuhr.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, he refuses as much “the petty malignity of Niebuhr [as] the weighty accusations of Grote” (1857/73, 206). At the same time he states his desire to avoid the two extremes, Droysen and Niebuhr, and on the contrary to praise Thirlwall in whose narration he sees “the nearest approach to the perfection of critical history. [...] It is therefore, on the whole, the Alexander of Thirlwall, rather than the Alexander of Grote and Droysen, who deserves to live in the memory of mankind and to challenge the admiration of the world” (172). Contrary to Grote, Freeman argues that Alexander had every right to consider himself Greek and as the champion of Greece against the Persians; that Alexander’s military victories were “lasting results in the history of the world” (183) because there is no doubt that the king “did carry

63 See Briant, “‘Alexandre et l’hellénisation de l’Asie,’” 34–35.

64 “In short, Niebuhr is, in this case, a mere reckless calumniator; Mr. Grote is simply one who, after weighing a mass of conflicting authorities, has come to a conclusion less favourable to Alexander of Macedon than we ourselves have come to after weighing the same authorities” (E.A. Freeman, *Historical Essays* (London, 1873) 1857, vol. 3, 165).

Hellenic culture into a large portion of the world”; and that there is no reason to doubt the reality of Alexander’s founding of numerous colonies that had “civilizing intentions” (194). Thus for Freeman one can say that Alexander was “the intentional missionary of Hellenic culture” (192) and, what’s more, that he led the avant-garde of the army of the cross (Christians) against the crescent (Muslims).<sup>65</sup>

These reviewers’ comments are very interesting (as are the personal convictions of each reviewer), but one observes that none of them is interested in going back to the origins of these contradictory and somewhat stereotypical portraits of the Macedonian conqueror. And this is true of the books they were reviewing. What’s striking in the case of Grote’s Alexander is that the long-distance combat with Droysen ends up obscuring all historiographic depth, since it transforms into a duel<sup>66</sup> what was carried out over several generations within a truly intra-European discursive network. Silence is kept when it comes to eighteenth-century works, and in particular the writings and thoughts of philosophers and philosophical historians (especially Montesquieu in France, and Robertson and Gillies in Scotland, who had praisingly introduced the achievements of the conqueror that came from Europe).<sup>67</sup> In a way, Grote behaves like Droysen did: despite the very large number of footnotes that appear in his *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen*, the German historian said nothing about his debt to eighteenth-century historiography.<sup>68</sup> It was only in his second work (1836, vii–xiv) that, probably in response to criticism, he consented, grudgingly, to name a selection of authors who had treated the period he calls *Hellenismus* (Flathe, Mannert, Schloßer, Gillies,

65 On this point, which goes beyond the subject being considered here, see Briant, “‘Alexandre et l’hellénisation de l’Asie,’” 29–34 and Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 503–512.

66 It must be pointed out that this duel is in part imaginary, since Droysen never takes on the task of arguing against Grote’s Alexander (cf. Nippel, “Droysen,” 211).

67 On Robertson, see P. Briant, “Alexander the Great and the Enlightenment: William Robertson (1721–1793), the Empire and the road to India,” *Cromohs* 10 (2005): 1–9 and *Alexandre des Lumières*, 178–179 and *passim*. On Gillies, whom Momigliano (*George Grote*, 6–7) already remarked had sort of preceded Droysen (and Grote!), see his *History of Greece* (J. Gillies, *The History of Ancient Greece, Its Colonies and Conquests, from the Earliest Accounts till the Division of the Macedonian Empire in the East, including the History of Literature, Philosophy and the Fine Arts*, 3 vols. (London: A. Strahan, 1786) and especially his *History of the World*, vol. 1 in which Alexander occupies a central place—see Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 181–6.

68 On the (unavowed) borrowing in Droysen from the image of Alexander in Montesquieu’s *De l’esprit des lois*, see Briant, “Montesquieu” and *Alexandre des Lumières*.

Krüger, Niebuhr, Grauert, Sainte-Croix). It can be said that the effect, *de facto*, of the combined practices of Droysen and Grote as historians was a powerful contribution toward exiling the Alexander of the Enlightenment into the darkness of oblivion.

The ongoing reevaluation of the eighteenth-century historiography does not entail that one deny the originality or value of Grote's work (or Droysen's). What matters is to understand how the figure of Alexander was constructed over a long period of time in modern Europe, and all of its contradictory and even irreconcilable facets. What I would simply like to underline here is that the debate between Grote and Droysen (as presented by the former) is the continuation of a debate that took place throughout the eighteenth century between two images of Alexander (that themselves were based on debates from the Roman era): on the one hand, a creator of an empire founded on communication, commerce, and understanding between people; on the other, a conqueror pushed on by an unstoppable ambition who only knew how to destroy and massacre instead of constructing and uniting. Without insisting on the details of all the arguments, I am tempted to say that, in its most essential features (foundation of cities and Hellenisation vs. orientalisation; systematic massacres vs. benevolence toward the conquered, etc.) a comparable debate had taken place a century before when, between 1749 and 1766, Mably brought forward a systematic and argued refutation of Montesquieu's presentation of Alexander in his replies to the two editions of *De l'esprit des lois* (1748, 1757).<sup>69</sup>

Reinforced by a considerable amount of erudition, Mably's Alexander was later developed by Sainte-Croix, who, in the 1804 edition of the *Examen*, openly leads the attack not only against Montesquieu but also against his principal British followers, W. Robertson and W. Vincent.<sup>70</sup> It is this tradition that, without saying so, Grote inherited, while adapting it obviously to the political context of his time. In contrast to Mably and Sainte-Croix, for example, there was no question about him denying or passing over in silence the beneficial effects of the Macedonian conquests when it came to the development of trade routes and commerce; however, as we have seen, he considerably moderated them.

Roughly fifteen years before the publication of Grote's Volume 12, Thirlwall had seen things perfectly clearly: by declaring his wish to remain equally distant from the prejudices of one and the other, he designated Sainte-Croix and Droysen as the very influential creators of the two interpretive models then in place (6, 162, n. 1). Where Montesquieu and his British followers saw a successful

69 On Mably's attack against Montesquieu's Alexander and the arguments used, see my analysis in Briant, "Montesquieu."

70 See Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 421–439.

conquest and “a revolution in the history of commerce,” and where Droysen wanted to see the awakening of a new world created from the fruitful encounter between Europe and Asia, Grote sees simply the last pitiful tremor of the history of Athens—the very city where, for a long time, there was “light[ed] up a small portion of a world otherwise clouded and stationary” (1, vii). It may be observed that Thirlwall demonstrated more affirmative lucidity as a historian by inscribing the history of Alexander as a moment within a *universal history*—a term which, at that time, designated in fact the history of Europe and its relations with the rest of the world.

Grote's *History* was translated into German, French, and Italian. Its reception was particularly favorable in Germany. There the translation of the *History* (1850–56) also gave impetus to other publications on similar themes.<sup>71</sup> These different versions contributed to nourishing the challenge, partial or complete, leveled (including Germany) against the interpretations developed by Droysen in his *Alexander* (1833), until the moment when the publication of the second edition of the *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (1877) and its French translation (1883) imposed the name and works of the man, who, in the meantime, had become an eminent specialist of Prussian history.<sup>72</sup> The French translation (1864–7) was also a great success, and it provoked interesting thinking about the synoptic reading of both Grote and Droysen.<sup>73</sup> Grote's *Alexander* even led Victor Duruy from one edition to another (1858–1919) to introduce

71 See, for example, Th. Fischer, *Griechische Mythologie und Antiquitäten nebst dem Capitel über Homer und auserwählten Abschnitten über die Chronologie, Literatur, Kunst, Musik &, übersetzt aus Georg Grote's Griechischer Geschichte*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1856–8). A. Bouché-Leclercq (“Préface du traducteur” à E. Curtius, *Histoire grecque, traduit de l'allemand sur la cinquième édition*, vol. I [Paris: E. Leroux, 1880], i–xvi), speaking of Grote, saw in these “special publications [the sign] of a certain weakness in composition, a rather loose assemblage of diverse parts.”

72 Among many possible texts, I refer the reader to two general studies each of which takes a different position vis-à-vis Droysen: J.-H. Bohlen, *Beiträge zu einer richtigen Würdigung des Charakters Alexanders des Großen* (Aachen: Beaufort, 1842), who doesn't fail to cite Montesquieu, and G. Pfizer, *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen für die Jugend* (Stuttgart: Liesching, 1846). See also the summary of Grote's *Geschichte* by J. Jacoby, *Geist der griechischen Geschichte. Auszug aus Grote's "Geschichte Griechenlands," von Dr. F. Jacoby, nach dessen Tode herausgegeben von Dr. Franz Rühl* (Berlin: Th. Hofmann Vlg., 1884), in which Alexander's time is presented in about ten pages (223–234), and in which Jacoby openly compares Grote and Droysen's points of view. In conformity to the model he is summarizing, Jacoby presents Droysen as the most famous of Alexander's “panegyrists” (233, n. 1). On the scholarly German critics of Droysen's *Alexander*, see especially W. Nippel, *Johann Gustav Droysen. Ein Leben zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik* (München: Beck, 2008), 29–34 and Rebenich, “Zur Droysen-Rezeption in der Alten Geschichte.”

73 See Roget, “Historiens allemands contemporains,” 87–92.

very significant nuances into his portrait of Alexander which at first he had narrowly modeled after the image given by Droysen.<sup>74</sup>

At the same time, also in France, A. Bouché-Leclercq presented *Histoire grecque*, a translation of the work of E. Curtius. It is known that the latter had adopted the position of considering that “the continuous history of Greece ends with the Peace of Demades.” In his translator’s preface, Bouché-Leclercq is careful to place Curtius’s work within its long context by recalling the “prodigious success” achieved by Grote’s *History*. He sees the proof in the fact that “Germany herself welcomes favorably and with some surprise this work of a banker from the City.” He then continues with these remarks: “The voluminous work of Grote is of indisputable value, and will be so for a long time yet, and I have no intention of questioning it. It is the most complete stock of information and argued judgments that we have about the political history of Greece” (1, 1880, iii).

Despite this praise, in the foreword to the fifth and last volume of his translation (5, 1883, 2), Bouché-Leclercq, who was then working on a translation of Droysen’s *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (*Histoire de l’Hellénisme*), addresses his readers and invites them to refer to the latter work, in particular “those who think that Greek civilization and the spread of its genius in the Hellenistic world; that is, hellenized by the Macedonian conquest, are also interesting things to know about.” In his judgment, this is the only way “to constitute a complete history of Greece, pursued right up to the end of the ancient world.” Ultimately, just as many critics had reproached Grote for ending his narrative around 300 BCE,<sup>75</sup> Bouché-Leclercq sides against Curtius and with Droysen in affirming that the history of Greek civilization must include Alexander, his diadochi and epigones, and extend to the Roman Empire and to Byzantium.<sup>76</sup>

74 See Briant, “Alexandre et l’hellénisation de l’Asie,” 35–38 (with accurate references to the works of Duruy).

75 Freeman, “Alexander the Great,” 161–2, praises the more judicious decision of Thirlwall to go up to 146 BCE. Before the work’s completion, J. S. Mill (“Review of Grote,” 447) had also hoped that Grote would also use the year 146 BCE, suggesting that he would add a thirteenth or fourteenth volume if necessary! Later, in a review essay on Hellenism in Asia, the anonymous author, “Hellenism in the East,” *Quarterly Review* 197 (1903): 504 mentions Grote and his reaction against Droysen, but he’s forced to add that by stopping his *History* in 300 BCE, he was not able to fully carry out his attack.

76 On the thinking of Bouché-Leclercq, one can refer to his *Avant-Propos* for his translation of Droysen (A. Bouché-Leclercq, “Avant-Propos du traducteur” à J.G. Droysen, *Histoire de l’Hellénisme* vol. 1 [1883], iii–xxxvi) and to his lessons on these subjects presented at the Sorbonne between 1888 and 1897 (Bouché-Leclercq, *Leçons d’histoire grecque* (Paris: Hachette, 1900), 237–352).

Long considered as a reference guide in Anglophone countries, at least on this or that detail in military history,<sup>77</sup> Grote's Alexander undergoes over the long term the same fate vis-à-vis Droysen's that Thirlwall's *History* received in relation to his own. Even though Droysen's work on Alexander was never translated into English, his Alexander within the new edition of the *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (1877) was almost universally recognized as a fundamental study, to the point where its author was held up (inaccurately) as a brilliant *prôtos euretēs*.

In recent years there has been a curious revival of interest in Grote's legacy among historians who, within a typical post-colonial approach, share his vision of Alexander as a butcher and his conquest as synonymous with carnage and famine. "Arguably, killing was what he was best," A.B. Bosworth has written recently in speaking of Alexander, and adds that he chooses to see things from the side of victims, "the eggs in Alexander's ecumenical omelette."<sup>78</sup> Avoiding Droysen, he specifies for his readers that "[his] concept of Alexander's reign [...] goes back in fact to Niebuhr and Grote, before Droysen produced his classic encomiastic interpretation of the period."<sup>79</sup> Therefore, this latest form of reception of Grote's *History* Volume 12 retains only the denunciations that had already been launched by the moralizing histories from the eighteenth century and the anti-colonial currents of that time (e.g., Diderot and Abbé Raynal in France)<sup>80</sup>—denunciations that are still used today to pursue the dual trial against Alexander's conquests and European colonizations in reaction to the longstanding praise in favor of "the first European to have conquered Asia."<sup>81</sup>

Bosworth's openly claimed affiliation with Grote is not without legitimacy, if one takes into account what his friend Alexander Bain wrote in a posthumous homage to Grote published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*

77 See the recent work of E. Badian, *Collected Papers on Alexander the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 233, 238 n. 20, 240 n. 41, 242 n. 51 (on the unfolding of the Battle of the Granicus River).

78 On what follows, see my argument in Briant, "Alexandre et l'hellénisation de l'Asie," 49–51, 57–62; Briant, *Alexander the Great and His Empire*, 139–141, 165–185. The same author (A.B. Bosworth, "Johann Gustav Droysen, Alexander the Great and the Creation of the Hellenistic Age," in *Alexander and His Successors: Essays from the Antipodes*, ed. P. Wheatley and R. Hannah [Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 2009], 1–27) has elsewhere presented an uncompromising analysis of Droysen's *Alexander*.

79 A.B. Bosworth, *Alexander and the East* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), v.

80 Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 371–385.

81 Briant, *Alexandre des Lumières*, 513–521, 702–4.

(20, 1871–2, iii–xi). He hides none of his moral umbrage against the Macedonian conqueror:

The last and crowning exploit of the historian was to unmask the world's conqueror and favourite, Alexander. With the most ample acknowledgements of Alexander's military genius and indefatigable activity, Mr. Grote has stripped his enterprises and his conduct of every virtue and merit; and in so doing has read a moral lesson against the adoration of force which has always lent a powerful aid to the oppressors of mankind" (p. v).

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## Grote on Aristotle's Logic

*Robin Smith*

Modern studies of Aristotle's logical works have been deeply informed by modern logical theory. Beginning with Łukasiewicz and Scholz, historians of logic have used the methods of symbolic logic to interpret Aristotle's logical theories, and with rich results.<sup>1</sup> One consequence of these studies is a general conviction among scholars in the field that, prior to the creation of modern formal logic that began with the work of Frege and others, an adequate frame of reference for understanding Aristotle's logical theory simply did not exist. Paradoxically, that is partly because the rise of modern logical theory carried with it the displacement of the traditional logic (based largely on Aristotle's works) that had been taken for granted as the correct theory for centuries. In the early decades of the twentieth century, that displacement took the form of a genuine controversy, with partisans of traditional logic contending that theirs was the true account of argument, or at any rate of actual human reasoning. Today, however, virtually all logicians would agree that the content of traditional logic can be completely represented within predicate logic and that the latter is a vastly richer and more powerful theory than the former. Indeed, a main purpose of Frege's in developing his logical system was to show that traditional logic, with its thesis that all propositions can be analyzed into subject-predicate form, simply cannot explain the actual structures of the propositions required for basic mathematics, and very few logicians would now dispute that he was successful in that purpose.<sup>2</sup> That very success has enabled modern logicians to take a fresh look at Aristotle's logical works from the perspective of modern logic, with an aim not of engaging in controversy about

1 See, J. Łukasiewicz, *Aristotle's Syllogistic from the Standpoint of Modern Formal Logic*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); H. Scholz, *Consise History of Logic*, trans. K.F. Leidecker (New York: Wisdom Library, 1961). For other examples, see the bibliography in Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, ed. R. Smith (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989).

2 For a discussion of the evolution of contemporary mathematical logic, see R. Goldblatt, "Mathematical Modal Logic: A View of its Evolution," in *Handbook of the History of Logic Vol. 7: Logic and the Modalities in the Twentieth Century*, ed. D.M. Gabbay and J. Woods (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 1–98. See also, G. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, trans. J.L. Austin, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960) and *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic and Philosophy*, ed. B. McGuinness (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).



whose logic is the correct one but rather of understanding just what Aristotle thought he was doing. What they discovered is an Aristotle who built logical theories in a manner reminiscent of modern formal logic.

George Grote, who died in 1871, eight years prior to the publication of Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, could hardly have imagined the revolution in logical theory that was about to occur. For him, Aristotle's importance as a logician was precisely as the founder of the only theory of logic he and his contemporaries knew.<sup>3</sup> However, Grote's picture of Aristotle's logic—and indeed his picture of logic itself—is heavily influenced by a separate issue going back at least to Francis Bacon. When Bacon wrote his *Novum Organum*, his goal was to promote a method for the advancement of knowledge, that is, for the discovery of new truths about nature. He deliberately contrasted his “new instrument” with the Aristotelian model of science he had learned from his contemporaries. In that model, science was a matter of demonstration from self-evident principles, known to be true on the basis of reason alone, and science progressed by the deduction of further consequences from these principles. The method of science, so conceived, was essentially argumentation, and new knowledge was acquired by deducing it from knowledge already obtained. For Bacon and his contemporaries, this picture of scientific knowledge was contained in Aristotle's logical works, which were traditionally called the *Organon* (“instrument”). In Bacon's view, it was an ineffective instrument for the increase of knowledge, valuable only as a tool for debating contests. In its place, he proposed a “new instrument,” a *novum organum* for the expansion and improvement of knowledge, that gave pride of place to empirical observation.

A critical element of this picture is that it regards logic as fundamentally a means for the discovery of new truths. Deduction from known principles contributes to the expansion of our knowledge just insofar as it leads to a genuine expansion of our knowledge. However, by that standard, deduction can never be of much value at all, according to an argument advanced by John Stuart Mill. Consider the simple inference “All humans are rational; Socrates is human; therefore, Socrates is rational.” If I know the first premise, Mill objects, then that knowledge must already include the knowledge that Socrates is rational, since Socrates is one of the humans. Therefore, my knowledge that the conclusion “Socrates is rational” is true already contains my knowledge

3 G. Grote, *Aristotle*, ed. A. Bain and G.C. Robertson, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1872), vol. 2, 133–4. See also, John Stuart Mill's comment on Aristotle as “the founder of logic” in his review of Grote's *Aristotle*, J.S. Mill (1873) “Grote's *Aristotle*,” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J.M. Robson, 33 vols. (Toronto: Toronto University Press; London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963–1991), vol. 11, 477.

that the conclusion is true. This deduction therefore leads to no increase in my knowledge: at best, it is simply a matter of noting something already known.<sup>4</sup>

This criticism can be extended to any deductive proof. A deductively valid argument is simply an argument the conclusion of which cannot be false if its premises are all true. Consequently, a deductive inference can never lead to the discovery of new truths not already contained in the premises on which it rests: indeed, a deductively valid inference is by definition precisely one that does not do this. In the terminology of modern logical theory, logical consequence is never ampliative. Mill, and following him Grote, transfer this to a claim about knowledge: if I know that the premises of a deductively valid argument are true, then I must *already know* that its conclusion is true, since that conclusion is contained in the premises. Thus, Mill argues, a syllogistic inference is always a *petitio principii*. I cannot know that all men are mortal without knowing that Socrates is mortal, since Socrates is included among all men; therefore, when I conclude that Socrates is mortal, I am simply announcing what I already knew.<sup>5</sup> Grote agrees with this: "Whoever pronounces the words, All men are mortal, has affirmed that Socrates is mortal, though he may never have heard of Socrates. . . . To enunciate this in the language of the Platonic *Menon*, we learn nothing by or through the evidence of the Syllogism, except a part of what we have already professed ourselves to know by asserting the major premiss."<sup>6</sup> For Grote, then, it is a presumption that logic must, if it is to be of any real value, show us how to discover new truths. Since he also agrees that the only means by which new truths can be discovered is induction, Grote pictures Aristotle's account of logic as recognizing only one side of the process.

For Grote, then, as for Mill, logic is a much larger enterprise than it is for a present-day philosopher: it includes, not only the theory of validity (i.e., logic in the modern sense) but also the theory of inductive generalization (i.e., from a modern standpoint, the philosophy of science) and a good deal of epistemology.<sup>7</sup> To some extent, this is a matter of terminology. However, it has the consequences not only that Grote is much more concerned with those aspects of Aristotle's logical works relating to induction and epistemology than a modern historian of logic would be but also that his evaluation of Aristotle's theory of inference is narrowly focused. In a word, Grote is only interested in Aristotle's results, not how he defends those results.

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4 See Mill's *A System of Logic*, in *Collected Works*, Book II, ch. 2.

5 Ibid., ch. 3.

6 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 306a (at 309).

7 Mill differentiated between the "Logic of Consistency" and the "Logic of Truth." See, *A System of Logic*, Bk II, Ch. 3, §9.

To a modern logician, one of the most striking aspect of Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* is that it contains a formal deductive theory. Aristotle first presents certain inferential forms as valid and then, using a precisely limited set of deductive techniques, proceeds to show that certain other forms are valid and still others are not valid. To establish validity, he uses deductive techniques very much like those found in Greek mathematical texts. To establish invalidity, he uses what from a modern standpoint are semantic techniques: he presents counterexamples to the validity of the form. Beyond this, Aristotle claims that he has proved not only the validity of those forms he has established but also that he has established the validity of *all possible* valid forms and the invalidity of all others: that is, Aristotle claims, and claims to have shown, that his syllogistic is *the* correct system of inference.

This leads to a still more striking similarity between Aristotle and modern logical theorists. Aristotle not only offers us a system of deductive inference but also makes that system itself the object of theoretical study. He carries out that investigation in the style of mathematics, giving proofs of the claims he makes about his system. Further still, he uses those results in proving further claims about the possible structures of the demonstrative sciences which are the subject of the *Posterior Analytics*. In the terminology of modern logical theory, Aristotle is therefore heavily engaged in *metalogue*: the study of the formal properties of a logical system.

These remarks will be easier to understand with some concrete examples of Aristotelian logical theory. In *Prior Analytics* I.1–7, Aristotle considers the possible forms of argument that can be constructed from sentences of four types: “All As are Bs,” “No As are Bs,” “Some As are Bs,” and “Some As are not Bs.” Aristotle’s standard way of stating these forms is in fact somewhat artificial in Greek: instead of “All As are Bs” he uses “B belongs to all A” (τὸ B ὑπάρχει παντὶ τῷ A), and similarly for the other forms:

Ordinary English	Aristotelian English	Aristotle's Greek
All As are Bs, Every A is B	B belongs to every A	τὸ B ὑπάρχει παντὶ τῷ A
No As are Bs, No A is B	B belongs to no A	τὸ B ὑπάρχει οὐδενὶ τῷ A
Some As are Bs, Some A is a B	B belongs to some A	τὸ B ὑπάρχει τινὶ τῷ A
Some As are not Bs, Not every A is a B	B does not belong to some/every A	τὸ B οὐχ ὑπάρχει τινὶ/παντὶ τῷ A

(Note that for Aristotle, “B does not belong to some A” and “B does not belong to every A” are equivalent in meaning.) Given these four forms (which are traditionally called “categorical sentences”), Aristotle then considers combinations of two sentences of these forms which share a term (e.g. “All As are Bs” and “All Bs are Cs,” which share the term B) and asks the question: when does such a pair of sentences entail a third categorical sentence having as its terms the two terms in the first two sentences which are not shared? An example of a pair which does entail such a sentence is the pair just given: the sentences “All As are Bs” and “All Bs are Cs” entail the sentence “All As are Cs,” which has as its terms A and C, the two terms not shared by “All As are Bs” and “All Bs are Cs.” Aristotle’s investigation proceeds in a remarkably elegant way. He begins with those premise pairs in which the shared term (which he calls the *middle* term) is subject of the first premise and predicate of the second (Aristotle calls this arrangement the *first figure*). Since there are four types of categorical sentence, there are sixteen possible combinations of these forms in the first figure. Aristotle says that four of these forms give “perfect” syllogisms, that is, yield a conclusion and need no further proof to show this:

All Bs are As; all Cs are Bs; therefore, all Cs are As  
 No Bs are As; all Cs are Bs; therefore, no Cs are As  
 All Bs are As; some Cs are Bs; therefore, some Cs are As  
 No Bs are As; some Cs are Bs; therefore, some Cs are not As

He then shows, through an ingenious method of counterexamples, that none of the other combinations gives a syllogism: he offers three terms that make the premises of that form true and the sentence “All Cs are As” true, and then three terms that make the premises of that form true and the sentence “No Cs are As” true. Following this, he turns to the other “figures”: the second, in which the middle term is predicate of both premises, and the third, in which the middle term is subject of both premises. Here, he employs two inferential techniques to show that certain combinations of premises “syllogize.” The first is a set of *conversion rules*, according to which, from a premise having A as subject and B as predicate, a second sentence can be inferred having B as subject and A as predicate (for example, from any sentence of the form “No As are Bs” the corresponding sentence “No Bs are As” can be inferred). The second is *reduction to the impossible*, that is, showing that a pair of premises P, Q entail a conclusion R by showing that the pair P, not-R entails not-Q.

It is this aspect of Aristotle’s logical works that modern interpreters find most striking. Grote, however, effectively passes over the entire exposition of the syllogistic in silence. He shows no interest in the fact that that exposition

takes the form of an axiomatized theory with formally defined rules of inference and formal proofs constructed with them. Instead, his interest is entirely in Aristotle's results, i.e. the list of which syllogistic forms are valid, not in how Aristotle reaches those results. This illustrates the gulf between Grote's perspective on Aristotle's logic and the perspective of modern interpreters. Hardly any modern logician looks to Aristotle's syllogistic for a substantive account of logic, and modern interpreters, well aware of the limitations of the syllogistic, are far more interested in how the system was built than in actually applying it to anything. For Grote, however, Aristotle's logic is not simply a historical artifact but something of a living reality, and he is far more interested in its application than in its internal development.<sup>8</sup> He is therefore somewhat impatient with precisely those structural points of greatest interest today.

A still more striking example is Grote's treatment of the argument in *Posterior Analytics* I.19–22.<sup>9</sup> As Grote is aware, what Aristotle offers there is a defense of the claim he makes in I.3 that there are no infinite regresses of premises from which a conclusion can be deduced. To explain the point: suppose that we have a proof of *P* by deduction from premises *Q*, *R*, a further proof of *Q* from premises *S*, *T*, and a further proof of *R* from premises *U*, *V*, and so on, with the premises of each proof being proved by deduction from further premises. Is it possible for such a premise regress (as I will call it) to continue indefinitely, or must it eventually come to a stop? The interpretation of this question is complex, and it turns out that the answer is crucially different for Aristotle's deductive system than it would be for any system relying on modern predicate logic. I will not enter into these details here beyond saying that Aristotle believes he can show that every such premise regress must eventually terminate and that the proof he offers for this relies on the results he establishes in the *Prior Analytics* concerning the formal structure of syllogistic arguments. From a modern perspective, this is a remarkably sophisticated argument much in the spirit of proof theory.

Grote recognizes that this is Aristotle's attention in *Posterior Analytics* I.19–22. However, his assessment of its significance is very different:

It is plain from Aristotle's own words that he intended [I.19–22] as a confirmation of [I.3]... But I cannot think the proof satisfactory; nor has it appeared so to able commentators either of ancient or of modern times—from Alexander of Aphrodisias down to Mr. Poste. The elaborate amplification added in these last chapters adds no force to the statement

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 213 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 327 ff.

already given at the earlier stage; and it is in one respect a change for the worse, inasmuch as it does not advert to the important distinction announced in chapter iii, between universal truths known by Induction and . . . universal truths known by Deduction from them . . . . Moreover, while trying to prove that there must be immediate universal truths, he neither gives any complete list of them, nor assigns any positive characteristics whereby to identify them.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that Grote simply does not understand what Aristotle is doing: he sees Aristotle's proof merely as an "amplification" of the assertion in I.3 that there are such principles. But what we find in I.3 is simply an assertion, without defense, of Aristotle's position:

We say, however, that not all scientific knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] is demonstrative, but rather that the science of unmiddled premises is undemonstrated. And it is evident that this must be so. For if it is necessary to have scientific knowledge of the prior things, i.e. the premises of the demonstration, and if the regress eventually comes to a stop, then these unmiddled premises must be undemonstrated. This is our view, then; and we say also that there is not only science, but also a certain origin of science by means of which we come to know terms.<sup>11</sup>

What Aristotle says here is that *if* a regress of premises "comes to a stop," then the premises at which it comes to a stop must be undemonstrated. Therefore, if they are known, then the knowledge of them cannot be demonstrative knowledge. However, Aristotle does not provide any argument that any regress "comes to a stop" but instead simply asserts that in his view regresses do come to a stop ("this is our view") and that, contrary to what some say, there is scientific knowledge of the unmiddled premises at which a regress ends. To say that an attempted proof of a statement "adds no force" to that statement is quite astonishing, and we must ask why it is that Grote is so quick to dismiss a proof as nothing more than an "amplification" of the statement it intends to prove.

However, the continuation of his remarks sheds some light on his concerns. He voices two complaints against Aristotle. The first is that there is no allusion to the "important distinction announced in chapter iii [i.e. *Posterior Analytics* I.3] between universal truths known by Induction and universal truths known

10 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 330–31.

11 Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 72b18–25.

by Deduction from them.”<sup>12</sup> It seems to me that this misses the structure of Aristotle's argument. The opponent Aristotle is responding to offers a dilemma. Suppose first that knowledge requires demonstration and that demonstration is always deduction from things already known. Then, if we know some proposition P, we must know it by deduction from other propositions Q, R that are already known. Since by hypothesis what is known must be deduced from what is already known, Q and R must be deduced from other propositions already known. The opponent's dilemma is then as follows: if this process continues forever, then we never find starting points from which all the rest can be deduced, and so nothing is known; if, on the other hand, we reach some proposition which cannot be deduced from anything else prior, then by hypothesis it cannot be known (and thus neither can anything deduced from it be known). Aristotle's reply denies that the first limb of the dilemma can occur: that is, he denies (and subsequently argues) that there can be any such infinite regress. His response to the second limb is to deny the opponent's hypothesis, that is, to deny that only that which is deduced from what is known is itself known. These are distinct points, and neither of them is actually argued for in I.3. The burden of the argument in I.19–22 is precisely to argue for those points, not to advert to the plain assertions of them in I.3. As in other cases, Grote seems somewhat insensitive to the distinction between asserting something and giving an argument for it (at least when that argument is relatively technical).

His second complaint is much more telling: Aristotle neither lists these immediate universal truths nor tells us how to identify them.<sup>13</sup> This is, in fact, correct as far as I.19–22 is concerned. Aristotle does not offer a single example of an indemonstrable truth in those chapters, and indeed there are very few such examples anywhere. A case can be made that Aristotle does offer a criterion for their identification in *Prior Analytics* I.27–30, but that criterion amounts to the definition of “immediate”: a true proposition is immediate if there is no middle term with which it can be demonstrated. In addition, Aristotle does sometimes cite examples of “common principles” or “common axioms”: “No predicate can be simultaneously affirmed and denied of a given subject,” “A given predicate must be either affirmed or denied of a given subject,” and “When equals are subtracted from equals, the results are equal.” Some of these (especially the first two) do receive extended discussion in *Metaphysics* IV, to which Grote devoted a separate study. However, the *Posterior Analytics* itself gives us only brief hints about what the indemonstrable principles on which demonstrative sciences rest are, in concrete terms. Grote's complaint reflects his basic

12 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 331–2.

13 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 332.



commitment to what might be called a Baconian picture of logic: logic ought to be the instrument by means of which we can discover new truths. So construed, logic is essentially a matter of epistemology and methodology.

### Aristotle's Syllogistic

From a modern perspective, Aristotle's most significant achievement as a logician is his theory of valid inference, usually known today as the *syllogistic*. This is in fact a theory of the valid arguments for a specific class of sentences, those traditionally called *categorical sentences*. A categorical sentence contains a subject term and a predicate term, and it either affirms or denies its predicate of its subject. For instance, "All Greeks are human" has *Greeks* as its subject term and *human* as its predicate, and it affirms *human* of *Greeks*. A categorical sentence may affirm or deny its predicate of its subject either of all its subject (as *All Greeks are human* does), or of some of its subject (*Some Greeks are human*). This theory was enormously influential in later periods of history and forms the core of the so-called traditional logic widely taught as a standard well into the twentieth century.

Grote's contemporaries also took the syllogistic to be something of a logical standard.<sup>14</sup> However, he, like many of his contemporaries, is interested only in Aristotle's results, not in how he establishes those results. What matters for him is which syllogistic forms are valid, rather in the manner that someone who needs to calculate areas or volumes might want only to know the relevant formulas and have no interest in how they are derived. In fact, he seems impatient with Aristotle's proofs and would have preferred explanatory examples: Aristotle "does not justify it by any real example; he produces no special syllogism with real terms, and with a conclusion known beforehand to be true . . . He counts upon the learner's memory and phantasy for supplying, out of the past discourse of common life, propositions conforming to the conditions in which the symbolical letters have been placed, and for not supplying any contradictory examples. This might suffice for a treatise; but we may reasonably believe that Aristotle, when teaching in his school, would superadd illustrative examples."<sup>15</sup> Grote's opinion here seems to be that a general proof,

14 For an example, see [W. Hamilton], "Recent Publications on Logical Science," *Edinburgh Review* 57, no. 115 (1833): 194–238. See also, W. Hamilton, *Lectures on Logic*, ed. by H.L. Mansel and J. Veitch, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1860).

15 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 215–6.

showing that a given form of argument is valid universally, is *inferior* to a few examples of valid arguments of that form.

For a related example, Grote is critical of the arguments Aristotle gives in *Prior Analytics* I.3 for the “convertibility” of propositional forms.<sup>16</sup> It is an important principle of Aristotle’s syllogistic that certain categorical sentences imply their converses, that is, the sentences obtained from them by interchanging their subjects and predicates. This holds for universal negative sentences and particular affirmative sentences: “No As are Bs” implies “No Bs are As,” and “Some As are Bs” implies “Some Bs are As.” Beginning with the earliest commentators, many have found the proofs for these conversion relations to be unsatisfactory. Aristotle argues for the convertibility of “No As are Bs” with a *reductio* argument: Suppose that No As are Bs but that it is not the case that No Bs are As. Then it must be true that Some Bs are As. But then some As will be Bs, which contradicts the assumption that no As are Bs. This appears to rely on the convertibility of “Some As are Bs,” which Aristotle has not yet proved; however, when he does prove it, he relies on his previous proof that “No As are Bs” is convertible. Thus, his proof seems to be circular. Grote takes note of this and says, “It appears to me that no other or better evidence of it can be offered, than the trial upon particular cases, that is to say, Induction.”<sup>17</sup> In footnote, he appeals to *Topics* II.3b15 ff. As an example of Aristotle defending a conversion rule by induction, and he concludes with the remark “The rule for the simple conversion of the Universal Negative rests upon the same evidence of Induction, never contradicted.”<sup>18</sup>

As a follower of Mill’s views, Grote is quick to see appeals to induction. Thus, he quotes Wallies with apparent approval to the effect that the use of figures, etc., in mathematical proofs is some sort of induction (“induction by parity of reasoning”).<sup>19</sup> For another example: Aristotle rejects the convertibility of particular negative propositions by offering a counterexample, that is, a true proposition of this type with a false converse. To a modern logician, this is exactly the right way to demonstrate that a relation of entailment does not hold: one counterexample is all that it takes. Grote does understand this point, but he unfortunately links it with induction:

He gives no proof of this, beyond one single exemplification: if some animal is not a man, you are not thereby warranted in asserting the converse,

<sup>16</sup> Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 209–13.

<sup>17</sup> Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 210.

<sup>18</sup> Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 210b.

<sup>19</sup> Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 211a.

that some man is not an animal. It is plain that such an exemplification is only an appeal to Induction: you produce one particular example, which is entering on the track of induction; and one example alone is sufficient to establish the negative of an universal proposition.<sup>20</sup>

The connection with induction Grote sees here is extremely tenuous, amounting to nothing but the use of a particular example. An inductive argument, however, is an argument proceeding from particular cases to their universal generalization, which is not what is going on here: as Grote himself recognizes, a single counterexample is all it takes to show that a universal generalization is false. In the same vein, Grote asserts in a footnote on this same passage that “The appeal to various separate cases is the only basis on which we can rest for testing the *correctness or* [my emphasis] the incorrectness of all these maxims proclaimed as universal.”<sup>21</sup>

In the exposition of the syllogistic, Aristotle establishes that certain pairs of premise forms “do not syllogize” (i.e., do not form the premises for any valid conclusion) by an ingenious method of double counterexamples. He provides two sets of concrete terms that can be substituted for the letters in the premise pair providing, in each case, true premises, but in one case a true universal affirmative “conclusion” and in the other case a true universal negative “conclusion.” Later on, Grote more or less correctly describes Aristotle’s procedure in doing this.<sup>22</sup> However, what he takes to be important is that it appeals to “the reader’s prior experience.” In fact, he says: “the *validity or* [my emphasis] invalidity of each mode of the First figure is tested by applying it to different particular cases, each of which is familiar and known to the learner *aliunde*.” This is exactly right as to the establishing of invalidity but exactly wrong for the case of validity: Aristotle never offers concrete terms to show that a given form is valid. Instead, he gives actual proofs for these cases—precisely those proofs that Grote passes over in silence. Still more explicitly: “The invalidity of the invalid moods, and the validity of the valid moods, rest alike on this ultimate reference to examples of propositions known to be true or false, by prior experience of the learner.”<sup>23</sup>

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20 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 212.

21 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 212c (at 212–13).

22 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 217–18.

23 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 217a (at 218).

### Aristotle's Modal Logic

The concepts of necessity and possibility are of great importance to Aristotle in many ways. His metaphysics and his physics depend crucially on the notion of potentiality: some things have some properties "in potentiality," that is, while they do not exhibit those properties, they have a capacity or potentiality for exhibiting them. If Socrates can speak Greek and I cannot, then this is a distinction that is present even when neither of us is actually speaking Greek: even while Socrates is silent, he has at that time an ability to speak Greek that I lack. Aristotle argues against a view (which he attributes to "Megarians") that such capacities actually exist only when they are exercised. On their view, at that very time when Socrates and I are not speaking, neither of us could have been speaking. For the Megarians, the fact that Socrates proceeds to speak Greek on a later occasion is no evidence that he could have done so earlier at a time when he did not, since (they insist) that only shows that he can speak Greek *now* (while he is doing so), not that he could have done so *then* (when he did not). Aristotle devotes considerable attention to the rejection of this view in several places, including some of the most difficult texts in his works: *On Interpretation* 9 and *Metaphysics* IX. While the interpretation of these texts remains a matter of much controversy, it is clear that Aristotle has what is called an *occurrent* view of capacities or dispositions: to say that Socrates can speak Greek is to say that he possesses, at the present time, a certain property.

Necessity and possibility may also be understood as properties of propositions: if Socrates possesses the potentiality of speaking Greek, then the proposition "Socrates is speaking Greek" is possibly true. We may express this in a proposition by making "possibly" a sentential operator: "Possibly Socrates is speaking Greek" is a sentence asserting the possibility, not the truth, of the proposition "Socrates is speaking Greek." Similarly, "Necessarily, Socrates is speaking Greek" asserts the necessity, not merely the truth. Modal logic is the study of the logical relationships among propositions when the operators "necessarily" and "possibly" are added to the language expressing them. Modern modal logic, built on the work of C.I. Lewis and Saul Kripke, is a highly developed, and highly complex, theory, and I will not attempt to give an overview of it here.<sup>24</sup> However, it provides a flexible framework for the modeling and interpretation of historical theories of modality, including Aristotle's.

Like modern formal logicians, Aristotle also gives an account that can fairly be called a modal logic. After presenting his syllogistic in *Prior Analytics* I.1–7, he then adds sentences expressing necessity and possibility and explores how

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24 See Goldblatt, "Mathematical Modal Logic."

these additions affect the valid forms. In particular, he investigates whether the addition of modal qualifiers to the premises of various forms of syllogism lead to a valid syllogism, possibly with a modal qualifier added, or instead lead to no conclusion. The details are far more complex than the syllogistic without modalities, but some examples will help. Consider the valid form known traditionally as *Barbara*:

A belongs to every B  
 B belongs to every C  
 Therefore, A belongs to every C

If we add “necessarily” to each of the premises, then, Aristotle holds, these premises lead to a conclusion that is itself necessary:

Necessarily A belongs to every B  
 Necessarily B belongs to every C  
 Therefore, necessarily A belongs to every C

However, if we make only one premise necessary, then, according to Aristotle, the result depends on which premise it is. He considers

Necessarily, A belongs to every B  
 B belongs to every C  
 Therefore, necessarily A belongs to every C

to be a valid syllogism. However, he rejects

A belongs to every B  
 Necessarily, B belongs to every C  
 Therefore, necessarily A belongs to every C

Instead, he holds that these premises only entail the non-necessary conclusion “A belongs to every C.”

Why does Aristotle make this distinction? That has been a matter of great controversy for ancient as well as modern interpreters. Even Aristotle’s close associate Theophrastus rejected Aristotle’s account, maintaining instead that in any inference, the modality of the conclusion is the same as the “weakest” modality among the premises. That is, if one premise is a possibility sentence, then the conclusion can only be a possibility sentence, even if the other premise is a necessity sentence; if one premise is assertoric, then the conclusion can

be at most assertoric; and only if both premises are necessity sentences can the conclusion be a necessity sentence. Aristotle's own theory, however, is far more complex than this simple example would suggest. Moreover, it is not at all clear that it can be interpreted coherently, since some parts of it seem to be inconsistent with others. A series of modern interpreters have expended a truly vast amount of effort in trying to make sense of Aristotle's modal logic: a partial list would include the work of Jan Łukasiewicz (1957), Storrs McCall (1963), Jeroen van Rijen (1989), Richard Patterson (1989), Paul Thom (1996), Ulrich Nortmann (1996, 2002), Adriane Rini (2011), and Marko Malink (2013).<sup>25</sup> This remains an extremely active area of research today.

When we turn from this wealth of work to Grote's remarks on Aristotle's modal logic, it is hard to avoid being shocked. He dismisses the entire enterprise in a sentence "But the special rules given by Aristotle . . . for the conversion of Modal Propositions and [the entire modal syllogistic] are both prolix and of little practical value."<sup>26</sup> Instead, he concerns himself with defending Aristotle, against Hamilton's criticisms, for having introduced modality into logic at all.<sup>27</sup> He does address some substantive points, perhaps the most interesting of which concerns how possibility is to be understood. Some explanation is required to set this issue in its context. The notion of possibility Aristotle uses is in a way at variance with what is standard in modern modal logic. To a modern logician, "It is necessary that P" is logically equivalent to "It is not possible that not P" and (consequently) "It is possible that P" is logically equivalent to "It is not necessary that not P." Aristotle is aware of this interdefinability, and in some places he recognizes it, but in his modal logic he opts instead for a different understanding of possibility: "It is possible that P" means "It is neither necessary that not P nor necessary that P." This definition

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25 J. Łukasiewicz, *Aristotle's Syllogistic from the Standpoint of Modern Formal Logic*; S. McCall, *Aristotle's Modal Syllogisms* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1963); J. van Rijen, *Aspects of Aristotle's Logic of Modalities* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989); R. Patterson, "The case of the two Barbaras: basic approaches to Aristotle's modal logic," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1989): 1–40; U. Nortmann, *Modale Syllogismen, mögliche Welten, Essentialismus: eine Analyse der aristotelischen Modallogik* (Berlin, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1996); U. Nortmann, "The logic of necessity in Aristotle—an outline of approaches to the modal syllogistic, together with a general account of *de dicto* and *de re* necessity," *History and Philosophy of Logic* 23 (2002): 253–65; A. Rini, *Aristotle's Modal Proofs: Prior Analytics A8–22 in Predicate Logic* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011); M. Malink, *Aristotle's Modal Syllogistic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

26 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 297.

27 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 187–8.

has the consequence that “It is possible that P” is equivalent to “It is possible that not P,” and in his exposition of his modal logic Aristotle often makes use of this equivalence. However, it introduces some difficulties into his system. Most notably, Aristotle sometimes uses argument through impossibility (*reductio ad absurdum*) to show that some forms are valid, and he does this in the modal syllogistic. Doing this requires a clear account of what the contradictory (negation) of a proposition is; and while the contradictory of “It is possible that P” on the modern understanding is “It is not possible that P,” which is equivalent to “It is necessary that not P,” on Aristotle’s account it is the complex proposition “Either it is necessary that P or it is necessary that not P.” Likewise, the contradictory of “It is necessary that not P” is not “It is possible that P” but the more complex “Either it is necessary that P or it is possible that P.” Aristotle is aware of this, and in the exposition of the syllogistic he often switches to the notion of possibility found in modern modal logic (“not necessarily not”) when making a *reductio* assumption. This vacillation between an official account of possibility as “two-sided” and an alternative as “one-sided” (which latter concept Aristotle usually marks as “possibility not in accordance with our definition”) is one of the matters making life difficult for modern interpreters. Grote is well aware of the distinction of sense, but his concern is entirely with deciding which of the two notions of possibility is legitimate. Recognizing that “two-sided” possibility is linked to the notion of potentiality in Aristotle’s metaphysics, he effectively criticizes Aristotle for introducing one-sided possibility even as an alternative. “The first, or bilateral potentiality, is the only sense at once consistent, legitimate, and conformable to ordinary speech,” he writes: “The sense of potentiality, as including the alternative of either affirmative or negative—*may be or may not be*—is quite essential in comprehending the ontological theories of Aristotle; and when he professes to drop the *may not be* and leave only the *may be*, this is not merely an equivocal sense of the word, but an entire renunciation of its genuine sense.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, Grote considers Aristotle’s “possibility not in accordance with our definition” as not a legitimate notion of possibility at all. This is some indication of how far apart his perspective is not merely from modern logicians (for whom it is the “bilateral” sense of possibility that is the difficult one) but even from Aristotle’s near contemporaries. Since Grote takes no account at all of the role of the two notions of possibility in the exposition of the modal syllogistic, his only perspective on them becomes a matter of their relative usefulness in the particular context of Aristotle’s metaphysics.

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28 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 186.



## Dialectic

The picture I have painted so far is largely a negative one: from the perspective of modern logic, Grote simply passes over most of what is most interesting about Aristotle's logic or even treats it dismissively. However, he stands with Aristotelian scholars of the last half century in taking great interest in Aristotle's account of dialectic. In this respect, he was well ahead of his peers and immediate successors. Aristotle's *Topics* (including *On Sophistical Refutations*, which is effectively its last book), which contains his account of dialectical argument, was given short treatment by scholars through the first half of the twentieth century as a work merely concerned with debating and not closely connected with Aristotle's serious philosophical views. Beginning with the work of G.E.L. Owen, however, opinion began a dramatic reversal.<sup>29</sup> Owen argued that Aristotle's method of developing and defending his philosophical views from the "appearances" (τὰ φαινόμενα) was essentially a dialectical process since these "appearances" included not merely (or even mostly) empirical observations but also opinions—the opinions of other philosophers, the opinions of humanity in general, the opinions of thoughtful people. Aristotle refers to these opinions as ἔνδοξα, a term variously translated as "received opinions," "reputable opinions," "accepted," "common beliefs." Dialectical argument, understood as argument taking as its premises this collection of opinions, then becomes Aristotle's basic philosophical method. He begins by collecting the ἔνδοξα concerning an issue and then works through them to note the contradictions and inconsistencies in them. These contradictions then identify the puzzles or difficulties (ἀπορίαι) that must be solved in developing a philosophical view (Aristotle has a verb to indicate this entire process: διαπορεῖν, "go through the puzzles"). (For brief accounts of this method in Aristotle, see *Metaphysics* A.1, and *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1.)

Following Owen, many scholars argued that Aristotle saw dialectical argument as a means of establishing the first principles of sciences. On Aristotle's own account, the principles of sciences cannot themselves be established by demonstration, since demonstration always depends on previously established premises and nothing is prior to the principles. Instead, Terence Irwin and others argued, Aristotle says in *Topics* I.2 that dialectic is not merely a useful critical instrument for exploring contradictions in received opinions but also

29 G.E.L. Owen, "Logic and Metaphysics in Some Early Works of Aristotle," in *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century*, ed. I. During and G.E.L. Owen (Göteborg: Symposium Aristotelicum, 1960), 163–90.

the means by which the principles are established.<sup>30</sup> This picture of Aristotle's philosophical method as a matter of dialectical argument has gained widespread, though not universal, acceptance. Here, Grote appears to have been somewhat ahead of his time. At the same time, Grote sees the role of dialectic in philosophy and science as essentially critical: "He does not mean that these *principia* can be proved by Dialectic, for Dialectic does not prove any thing; but it is necessary . . . to assure us that all the objections capable of being offered against them can be met."<sup>31</sup>

Grote stresses—and in my opinion correctly—that Aristotle's account of dialectical argument is intended as a systematic description of a practice well established before Aristotle: "This dialectical debate, which Aristotle found current at Athens, he tries in the *Topica* to define and reduce to system."<sup>32</sup> The role of ἐνδοξα in dialectical argument is therefore somewhat complex. He writes: "whenever a proposition is fortified by a certain body of opinion, Aristotle admits a certain presumption (greater or less) that it is true . . . The essential feature of the *Endoxon* is, that it has acquired a certain amount of recognition among the mass of opinions and beliefs floating and carrying authority at the actual time and place."<sup>33</sup> These remarks indicate, I believe, that Grote recognizes a dual aspect to ἐνδοξα. On the one hand, as premises generally accepted, they can serve as starting points for argument with others, since one's interlocutor is likely to grant them.<sup>34</sup> This reflects an essential feature of dialectical argument: It is essential to dialectical argument that it is directed at an interlocutor and obtains its premises from that interlocutor's agreement. (In my opinion, this point has not received sufficient attention in the recent literature on dialectic.) On the other hand, the fact that a proposition has been accepted by at least some body of people is itself some evidence for its truth. Grote's phrase "a certain presumption (greater or less) that it is true" captures the level of its evidence well.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, for Grote, the role of dialectical argument in connection with the principles of sciences is essentially critical. His paraphrase of the crucial section of *Topics* I.2, while rather expansive, shows his view well:

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30 T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

31 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 393.

32 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 386.

33 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 389–90.

34 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 318–9.

35 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 389.

... it opens a new road to the scrutiny of the first *principia* of each separate science. These *principia* can never be scrutinized through the truths of the science itself, which presuppose them and are deduced from them. To investigate and verify them, is the appropriate task of First Philosophy. But Dialectic also, carrying investigation as it does everywhere, and familiarized with the received opinions on both sides of every subject, suggests many points of importance in regard to these *principia*.<sup>36</sup>

Grote's more balanced view is, in my opinion, a useful corrective to recent pictures of dialectical argument as Aristotle's way of establishing what cannot be demonstrated. A further corrective point may be added. Aristotle takes pains to distinguish dialectical argument from the "eristic" and "sophistical" argument that is the subject of *On Sophistical Refutations*: the latter is a dishonest and deceptive process, whereas the former has genuine value, philosophical and otherwise. Grote finds Aristotle's distinction ultimately difficult to maintain, and he criticizes Aristotle for it:

I think it a mistake on the part of Aristotle to treat the fallacies incidental to the human intellect as if they were mere traps laid by Sophists and litigants. . . . But the dishonest disputant does not originate these infirmities: he finds them already existing . . . It is the business of those who theorize on the intellectual processes to specify and discriminate the Fallacies as liabilities to intellectual error among mankind in general, honest or dishonest . . . not to present them as inventions of a class of professional cheats . . .<sup>37</sup>

Instead, Grote proposes that in Aristotle's time there was generally a great deficit of logical understanding and that gross fallacies were likely to go undetected even by the educated.<sup>38</sup> He notes that a critical feature of Aristotle's distinction between sophistry and dialectic is the notion of *merely apparent* ἐνδοξα. Grote asks: apparent to whom, and apparent when? If "merely apparent" means "only appearing so to someone who lacks enough logical acumen to see through it," then the distinction is not a matter of anything like logic but rather a reflection of the general level of education. So, Grote observes:

36 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 392.

37 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 2, 79.

38 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 2, 97–8.

According to Aristotle himself, therefore, the Dialectician is agonistic and eristic, just as much as the Sophist. . . . The line which Aristotle draws between them is one not founded upon any real distinction between two purposes and modes of procedure, but is merely verbal and sentimental; putting aside under a discredited title that which he himself disliked.<sup>39</sup>

Grote summarizes neatly: "The Sophist, as Aristotle describes him, is only the Dialectician looked at on the unfavorable side and painted by an enemy."<sup>40</sup> Grote's opinion here reflects his own view of the Sophists, which was far more positive than that current in his time. In his translation with commentary of Aristotle's *On Sophistical Refutations*, Louis-André Dorion marks this as a crucial, if long neglected, advance: Grote was the first (by many decades) to recognize the "eristic dimension of dialectic,"<sup>41</sup> later given prominent stress by Robinson, Le Blond, and others. In effect, Grote's criticism of Aristotle's distinction reinserts Aristotle (like Plato) into his historical context.

### Grote as Commentator and Translator

Grote proceeds largely by way of paraphrase, in the tradition of ancient commentators like Sophonias. Long sections of his work consist of paraphrase or summary with only limited commentary, with Greek text often cited in footnotes and with limited interpretive parenthetical remarks. The occasional more elaborate discussions appear in footnotes. Grote paraphrases closely but abundantly, often rendering a term with two alternative translations connected by "or;" since his concern is to present Aristotle's views rather than to give a formal translation, he moves seamlessly from close paraphrase to broad summary. Overall, his translations are accurate, with allowance made for the somewhat elevated and orotund style that reflects his own.

Although Grote does not pretend to be offering an edition of Aristotle's logical works, he is thoroughly familiar with ancient and modern commentators and sometimes engages with them on philological points. Among ancient sources, he cites Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ammonius, Philoponus, Themistius, Eudemus, Theophrastus (one should bear in mind that he worked without access to such resources as *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*), as

39 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 2, 100.

40 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 2, 101.

41 Aristotle, *Les Réfutations Sophistiques*, ed. and trans. L.A. Dorion (Quebec: J. Vrin, 1995), 67n1 (on Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 2, 99–106).

well as Plotinus, Porphyry, Dexippus, Boethius, Simplicius, and occasionally Andronicus. Among modern commentators, he most frequently engages Waitz, Pacius, Zabarella, Brentano, Barthelémy St. Hilaire, Poste, and O.F. Owen; less frequently Trendelenburg, Prantl, Ueberweg. He also frequently cites his contemporaries in logic and philosophy, above all Mill and Hamilton. Grote only rarely pursues a textual point in his commentary, but when he does, he does so at great length. For instance, he engages with Waitz, Bekker, and Bussemaker on the correct reading of *On Interpretation* 19b31 ff.<sup>42</sup> Near the close, Grote says, "This long note, for the purpose of restoring clearness to an obscure text, will appear amply justified if the reader will turn to the perplexities and complaints of the ancient Scholiasts." It must be said however that Grote's impact on Aristotelian scholarship in the last century has been minimal. Ross, for instance cites him just once in his commentary on the *Analytics*, and then only to dismiss his proposed emendation of 68b20 as "not probable."<sup>43</sup>

### Summary

In summary, if we are to assess Grote's assessment of Aristotle's views on logic, we must take account of the enormous gulf in the understanding of logic itself between his time and ours. The entire field of modern formal logic, as it has developed since Frege, might well have struck Grote and many of his contemporaries as an excessive elaboration of useless subtleties;<sup>44</sup> it is therefore no surprise that he passes over without comment, or even dismisses, precisely what current interpreters find most significant in such works as Aristotle's *Analytics*. However, Grote was well ahead of his time in recognizing that there was a good deal more to the sophists than the sort of imposture traditionally associated with them based on characterizations of them in Plato and even Aristotle, and his criticism of Aristotle's account of eristic reflects this.

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42 Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. 1, 175a.

43 Aristotle, *Prior and Posterior Analytics*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 485.

44 This was certainly Mill's opinion, see *A System of Logic*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 7, 172; see also, J.S. Mill to J.E. Cairns, 5 Dec. 1871, *Collected Works*, vol. 17, 1862–3.

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## Grote's Moral Philosophy and its Context

*Jerome B. Schneewind*

George Grote wrote relatively little on the issues of moral philosophy. In the *Fragments on Ethics* there are four posthumously published essays on systematic ethics, at least three of them written in the 1840's. Late in life, as part of a never completed major work, Grote wrote a long essay on Aristotle's ethics, and a briefer one on Aristotle's politics. These contain almost no expressions of Grote's own views.<sup>1</sup> He contributed to Alexander Bain's *Mental and Moral Science* some extended remarks on William Whewell's philosophical ethics.<sup>2</sup> Aside from John Stuart Mill's attack on it, this is one of the very few nineteenth-century discussions of Whewell's elaborate anti-utilitarian theory.<sup>3</sup> To the same volumes Grote also contributed expositions of the Stoic and Epicurean theories.<sup>4</sup> In *Plato and the other Companions of Sokrates* (1865) there are numerous summaries of and remarks on Plato's moral philosophy, mostly neutral, sometimes giving Grote's assessment explicitly, sometimes simply allowing it to be inferred.

Grote avowed himself a utilitarian and was much influenced by Bentham and James Mill. He was the pseudonymous editor, "Philip Beauchamp," who turned Bentham's drafts into the anti-religious *Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* (1822). The book contains almost nothing philosophical, being rather an essay on the psychology and sociology of religious belief. It is thoroughly Benthamite in temper, and never considers

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1 The essays are in Grote's *Fragments on Ethical Subjects; being a selection from his posthumous papers*, ed. Alexander Bain (London: John Murray, 1876). The dating comes from M.L. Clarke, *George Grote. A Biography* (London: Athlone Press, 1962), 132, n. 3, who dates only the first three essays. The fourth is enough like them to allow us to suppose it was written at about the same time. Grote's few comments in footnotes to the 1872 edition of James Mill's *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* do not touch on moral philosophy.

2 Alexander Bain, *Mental and Moral Science. A Compendium of Psychology and Ethics*, 2 vols, 3rd ed. 1884 (London: Longmans, Green: 1868), vol. 2, 290–301.

3 Grote makes a few references to Whewell's ethics in *Plato and the other Companions of Sokrates*, 3 vols (London: Murray, 1865). He also shows himself to be very knowledgeable about modern moral philosophy: he refers, for example, to Malebranche, at the time almost unknown in Britain.

4 Clarke, *Grote*, 190, n. 1, and Bain's Preface to the third edition of Grote's *Plato*, 1884, iv.

the possibility that God's justice might be wholly distinct from his benevolence. The author therefore never raises any question about relations between these two moral attributes.<sup>5</sup>

Grote's systematic essays are thus the main sources for an understanding of his theoretical views on moral philosophy. They are concerned with issues debated among British moral philosophers in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. One main topic was the origin of moral feelings and ideas. The other was the criterion of morality. The two topics were held to be closely connected. I begin with a brief sketch of the issues as Grote would have known them.<sup>6</sup>

The modern search for the origins of our ideas started as an empiricist enterprise. It was begun by Locke's extensive account of his theory of knowledge in his 1689 *Essay on Human Understanding*. Locke aims to show that there is no possibility of extending our knowledge on any basis other than experience. He begins by arguing that our ideas themselves are all derived from experience. This entails the rejection of "innate ideas," ideas supposed to be part of the mental equipment with which God creates our minds. Locke offers accounts of our main ideas showing how they can be obtained from sensory or emotional experience. Our complex or definable ideas, like the idea of an apple, can all be shown to be composed of simple ideas, which cannot be defined and can only be acquired by experience of what they are ideas of. Thus a person born blind can have no idea of red. Locke's argument is basically constituted by his accounts of complex ideas that might seem at first not to be made up of experiential simple ideas. Our ideas of space, time, number, shape, God, good, and right, for example, are all explicable as derivative from experiences.

Locke thinks that one consequence of this view is that experiential evidence must be offered to support any claim to knowledge. Even obvious truths such as that  $2 + 2 = 4$  result from observing innumerable times that two groups of two objects result in a group of four objects. We therefore do not just "see" that  $2 + 2 = 4$ . And because moral ideas, like all others, are complexes derived from experience, there can be no valid claim that we "just know" that promises ought to be kept or that superior powers ought to be obeyed.

One of Locke's later critics, Richard Price, argues against this view. He claims that reason is itself a source of simple ideas—of number, space, and time, for

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5 See for instance Philip Beauchamp (pseudonym), *The Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* (London: R. Carlile, 1822); and reprint (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2003), 60.

6 For more detail see my [J.B. Schneewind], *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1977.

instance, and also of justice, veracity, and fidelity. He claims that there are particular cases where we do indeed immediately see that justice is not the same as benevolence, or that honesty is not the same as productiveness of good. We have a power of intuition, Price says, which is the source of our moral ideas and beliefs, and which does not simply give us the results of numerous sense experiences. We see intuitively, moreover, that we ought to give priority to moral claims over those of self-interest if the two clash. Here Price is avowedly following Bishop Butler, whose sermons were widely read in the nineteenth century. Butler is a major proponent of the view that benevolence is not the whole of virtue. The virtues of justice and veracity make demands on us which are binding regardless of the results brought about by being just or truthful.<sup>7</sup>

Innatists argued that if there are innate ideas they must be given to us by God. Moral ideas have as part of their meaning that they are authoritative directors of our conduct. This shows that God means them to be our guides. The utilitarians hold that our one overriding obligation is to bring about as much good as we can. We should be as beneficent as we can. Utilitarians conclude that we must infer the rightness or wrongness of any particular act from its consequences. But if benevolence is not the whole of virtue then utilitarianism cannot be correct. Good consequences cannot be the sole source of rightness. The intuitionists hold that we can see what is right or wrong immediately, with no need for inference. We intuit the truth of several basic moral principles, not just one. For much of the nineteenth-century controversy in ethics centered on the disagreements between intuitionists and utilitarians.

A great deal of name-calling occurs in these controversies. The Benthamite reformers accuse intuitionists of being reactionary authoritarians, dogmatically refusing to argue because they claim to know intuitively the truth of the morality subordinating women to men, laity to clergy, lower to upper orders. Since the Benthamites claim that the good is constituted by pleasure and absence of pain, the intuitionists accuse them of teaching a low and even swinish anti-Christian morality.

Invective aside, there was also some argument. It centered on the origin of ideas. Benthamites went back to the Lockean view. A eighteenth-century version of Lockeanism was worked out by David Hartley.<sup>8</sup> He is acknowledged by James Mill, whose *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829) is the

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7 For a fuller account see J. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

8 David Hartley, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations*, 2 vols. (London: Richardson, 1749).

definitive early nineteenth-century account of the theory and the one George Grote would have taken as authoritative.

Mill holds that our experience is constituted by sensations, derived from the five senses and from muscular and other internal sources. Ideas are copies of sensations. Some sensations, like those of colors, smells, tastes, are simple. But even simple sensations come in regular sequences or conjunctions. The sensation of lightening is usually followed by that of thunder, so when we see or even just think of the one, we tend to think of the other. The ideas, Mill says, are associated. If sensations regularly occur at the same time, or if one regularly follows the other, their ideas will be associated. All of these regularly experienced associations set up patterns in our thinking. They are the ultimate explainers of all our complex ideas. The general law of association, Mill says, is that "our ideas spring up, or exist, in the order in which the sensations existed, of which they are the copies."<sup>9</sup>

Complex ideas arise from association of simple ideas. For instance, we associate the sight of a body with the idea that it will feel resistant if touched. This gives us the complex idea of solidity. To understand a complex idea is to see what are its component simple parts. The science of psychology aims to discover the laws according to which simple ideas become associated. The psychologist goes on to analyze our complex ideas so as to understand them better. This can be difficult because when ideas have been frequently associated they "sometimes spring up in such close combination as not to be distinguishable." Thus we cannot think of color without thinking of extension, nor of solidity without shape.<sup>10</sup>

Mill devotes many chapters to explaining complex mental activities, including naming, conceiving, imagining, and classifying. All of them are ways of manipulating ideas. So too are belief and reasoning. He then moves on to the distinction between the intellectual and the active powers of the mind. In the active powers are included sensations and ideas "considered as not merely existing but also as exciting to action."<sup>11</sup> Here pleasurable and painful sensations and the ideas involving them are foremost. Motives, the will, and intentions complete the picture. Mill treats pleasure as giving us the idea of good and pain that of evil, without seeming to feel any need to justify the view.<sup>12</sup> And he holds that we always try to obtain pleasure and to avoid pain. If we do not pursue some available good, it is because other goods, or some pains, are

9 J. Mill, *Analysis*, vol. 1, 78.

10 *Analysis*, vol. 1, 190, 93.

11 *Analysis*, vol. 2, XVI 181.

12 *Analysis*, vol. 2, XXII 256.

more potent to move or deter us.<sup>13</sup> The motivating power of the thought that something is pleasant is thus part of the idea of good.

This point is crucial to Mill's analysis of the virtues. Prudence and fortitude, he says, are good for the agent, justice and beneficence good for others. The pleasant ideas of these goods are affections and move us to act.<sup>14</sup> Virtue itself is simply the name for all four of the dispositions named by the particular virtues taken together. We are strongly moved to virtue because we associate so many goods with the idea. The names of the virtues are moreover all "names of Praise."<sup>15</sup> And desire of praise, and, associated with this, desire of fame, add to the motivational power of thoughts of virtue.

Association explains our love of praise and praiseworthiness. We love praise because we associate with it the thought that those who praise us will do good for us—in other words, will bring us pleasure. The idea of praise becomes inseparable from the idea of pleasurable consequences to ourselves. The association of an idea of my act with the thought that it will be praised gives us the idea of praiseworthiness. Mill says a few lines later that this "has reference not to what are, or to what shall be, but to what ought to be, the sentiments of mankind."<sup>16</sup> He offers no account of his switch from "is" to "ought" here. But what he has said suffices, Mill thinks, to explain moral approbation (and, with suitable adjustments, disapprobation). There is no need for any special sense or any non-empirical idea.<sup>17</sup> There is therefore no need to bring the idea of God into the explanation of moral ideas.

Grote shares James Mill's conviction that specifically moral ideas can be explained in wholly empirical terms. In the first of his essays on moral philosophy he offers an analysis of the moral sentiments which is designed to show just what goes into constructing them. The analysis he gives is more complex than Mill's. Ethical sentiment, Grote says, is composed of four elements: our self-regarding tendencies, our sympathetic tendencies, our benevolent affections and our malevolent affections.<sup>18</sup> All of these operate through our tendency to view ourselves in two ways. We think of ourselves first as agents, each set apart from others in pursuing his own aims. We also think of ourselves as patients, affected like everyone else by what others do. Ethical sentiment is essentially social. We think of others as having interests, as we do, and

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13 *Analysis*, vol. 2, XXII 258.

14 *Analysis*, vol. 2, XXIII 284 ff.

15 *Analysis*, vol. 2, XXIII 293.

16 *Analysis*, vol. 2, XXIII 294–99.

17 *Analysis*, vol. 2, XXII 302.

18 Grote, *Fragments*, 6–7.

we sympathize with them. We feel benevolent toward those who help us or others, and we feel ill-will toward those who harm us or others. We get the idea of social reciprocity by combining the idea of individual conduct with ideas of harm or benefit affecting the agent and coming from others. Add to this the idea that there is a sanction encouraging helpful actions and discouraging harmful ones, and the moral sentiment is the result.

Although morals differ from one society to another, the moral sentiment is universal in its form. It is everywhere the idea of acts arousing admiration or scorn from others, combined with the thought that helpful acts are to be rewarded, harmful acts punished.<sup>19</sup> "Association," Grote asserts, "knits together . . . the idea of the act on [ the agent's] part with the corresponding disposition on the part of others, in such a manner that the one cannot be thought of without the other." The association is in fact so close that we cannot become conscious of the separate elements. And when the idea of sanction is added we have "the *Form* of Ethical Sentiment, as distinguished from the *Matter*."<sup>20</sup>

As to the matter, Grote holds that all societies agree in attaching the ethical sentiment to some specific kinds of conduct. The sentiment always limits malevolence; it encourages benevolent impulses; it encourages the virtues of self-command, such as prudence, courage, and temperance. Beyond this, however, we cannot find commonalities.<sup>21</sup> What counts as disgraceful, honorable, wrong, or right differs widely among different societies and times. Those who believe in a unique moral sense or instinct, or a divinely given moral feeling, have no good explanation of this variety. They must suppose a different moral faculty for each variation in the matter of moral judgment. But on Grote's view, we can see that the variety of moral judgments arises from different beliefs about what is beneficial to society. And this is a scientifically superior view.

In the next essay Grote takes up the idea of obligation, about which James Mill says little or nothing. Grote first distinguishes the point of view of the individual agent from the point of view of society. Morality, he then claims, involves three notions: command, duty, and sanction. In positive morality society issues commands; the individual is the inferior who must obey, under threat of sanctions. The supremacy of conscience, of which Bishop Butler made so much, is just the supremacy of the public voice, whose authority is backed by social sanctions.<sup>22</sup> The ancient moralists, Grote remarks, ignored the social

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19 *Fragments*, 8–13.

20 *Fragments*, 13–14.

21 *Fragments*, 14–7.

22 *Fragments*, 34–5.

side of morality. They considered only the highest good of the individual. Consequently they did not distinguish what is optional from what is necessary or obligatory. While the individual's point of view is important, positive morality as Grote sees it is concerned primarily with the social good. Moreover the "foundations of morality" lie in the collective opinion of the majority of society, not in individual opinion. The idea of obligation includes the idea of command and sanction "*from without*," overriding individual inclination. There are indeed cases in which one may think public morality mistaken. The authority of morality is nonetheless essentially the idea of approbation from without. This idea arises from our experience of approval or disapproval by others. These feelings are social, not personal. If we feel disapproval of someone's act we think others should disapprove of it as well. If others do not in fact feel as we do, we form the idea of a better-informed public which would agree with us. The idea of public sentiment as it ought to be may be stronger in us than the idea of public sentiment as it actually is.<sup>23</sup>

The moral sentiment also includes an implication of reciprocity. If as agent I feel an obligation to perform some act, I as member of the public feel entitled to demand that others similarly situated have a similar duty. Obedience to a call from without, coming from the public, is "*strictly moral obligation*: the command executed is a *moral command*: the sanction by which it is enforced is the *moral sanction*," which is basically public condemnation concurring with the agent's own condemnation of himself.<sup>24</sup> Here Grote offers some well-informed and sympathetic comments on Kant's ethics—most unusual coming from an English thinker at this time, and especially so from an avowed admirer of James Mill, who made no secret of his contempt for Kant. Grote links his own view of the reciprocity involved in moral approval to Kant's claims about universalizability (though he avoids the word). He never suggests that universalizability might serve, as Kant thinks it should, as a test of the acceptability of a plan of action. He rejects—unsurprisingly—Kant's claim that pure practical reason alone can motivate us to do our duty. Grote says instead that when we do as we ought despite what it costs us, the pain associated in the agent's mind with the idea of disobeying the moral law is greater than the pain of the sacrifice. We think of the pains consequent on yielding to temptation—self-reproach, fear of punishment, loss of esteem from others. And these outweigh the pain of not enjoying whatever tempts us.

When a constant association of such fears with the idea of resisting temptation is formed, and when this association regularly governs one's conduct one

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23 *Fragments*, 36–8.

24 *Fragments*, 40.



is said to be a “truly *moral* man.”<sup>25</sup> “The man who acts morally,” Grote says, “acts just as much under the influence of ideas of pleasure and pain, as the man who acts immorally: only his pleasures and pains are different.”<sup>26</sup> And Kant is also right about autonomy—if suitably understood. Being autonomous does not require the absence of pleasure or pain as motives. It means that in moral action success in achieving one’s goal is not required. What is required is that one try as hard as possible to do what one thinks right. “Sincere, hearty, and energetic obedience to the moral law is all which is required.”<sup>27</sup> Usually our pleasures come from attaining our goal. In moral action, the will is not determined by this thought but by “the idea of a certain line of conduct necessary to be pursued by ourselves.” The will is therefore autonomous. And although the moral law expresses the public’s command coming from without, the moral man is autonomous because he has shaped his own sentiments to accord with this command.<sup>28</sup>

The title of the third essay, “Ancient systems of moral philosophy” gives only one of its main subjects. Grote says (as he does also in the previous essay) that the ancient moral philosophers addressed primarily if not solely the highest good of the individual. They did not give much consideration to the good of the community. They did not, however, think each individual the best judge of his own happiness: that was to be determined by the sage, the philosopher himself.

Having elaborated on this point, Grote turns to his second concern: the relation between the good of the individual and the good of the community. These, he insists, must be taken to be “distinct and independent” principles of moral reasoning.<sup>29</sup> These provide the canons for judgment for individual acts and dispositions to act. Usually the two canons will lead to convergent conclusions: what benefits the agent will also benefit society. But when they diverge, it is necessary for “the ethical philosopher” to decide which he will prefer. And it seems obvious to Grote that the good of society is always to be preferred to that of the individual. “This,” he says, “is the source of the *moral imperative*,” which is the voice of the community addressing the individual.<sup>30</sup> Each agent

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25 *Fragments*, 43.

26 *Fragments*, 44.

27 *Fragments*, 46.

28 *Fragments*, 47–8.

29 *Fragments*, 57.

30 *Fragments*, 58, 61.

generally feels the force of this imperative. As a member of the community he passes on himself the same judgment he would pass on another member.<sup>31</sup>

Grote here approaches an issue of great importance, but without seeming to see it. He does not offer any explanation of why the principle of forwarding the common good always take precedence over the principle of forwarding the agent's own good. This is a point at which his opponents might easily accuse him of lapsing into intuitionism. After all, Grote says that these are the principles of all moral reasoning.<sup>32</sup> But he continues as if he were still considering the principles to be matters of sentiment or feeling. If he took them to be rational principles he might be forced to ask if they contradict one another. Taking them as sentiments he might still have asked how unified a person can be when swayed by two basic feelings pulling in opposite directions. The issue of the conflict between self-interest and concern for the greatest common good has a long history in one form or another in moral philosophy. In the later nineteenth century it became central to Henry Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics* (1874). But Grote does not elaborate on it.

The fourth essay, "The Idea of Moral Philosophy" is longer and more complex than the others. Grote still takes one task of moral philosophy to be that of explaining moral emotions and dispositions.<sup>33</sup> The other task is that of being a moral critic.<sup>34</sup> No one can avoid criticism of accepted morality, but that in turn requires explanation of the sentiments. And calling them "natural" neither explains them nor shields them from criticism.<sup>35</sup>

Grote then asks about moral obligation. He appeals to sentiment to answer. Each of us needs the help of others, so each feels the need—the obligation—to display dispositions which will earn it. In time the feeling of this need becomes directly associated with the ideas of actions that earn it. The feeling of obligation thus does not arise from the nature of the act alone.<sup>36</sup> It has also a second source, in the demands of society upon the individual. The philosopher will say that only such dispositions as lead us to forward the safety, happiness and enjoyment of the community will be demanded by an enlightened public opinion. Granting that existing public opinion is not solely directed to this

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31 *Fragments*, 62.

32 *Fragments*, 57.

33 *Fragments*, 67–8.

34 *Fragments*, 68–9.

35 *Fragments*, 71.

36 *Fragments*, 71.

end, Grote insists that opinion is converging to this point and that in any case it ought to do so.<sup>37</sup>

There are subsidiary ends which win approval, and these differ from one society to another. The variety is due sometimes to error about what produces happiness, sometimes to ideas associated with it but not in fact causally connected to it. Taken universally everyone agrees that ethical sentiment approves of what protects the safety and happiness of society. As we learn more, we can see more clearly that this is so. But we do not find any single source of ethical sentiment. It arises partly from self-interest, since we need the help of others; partly from sympathetic understanding of the needs of others; and additionally from antipathetic feelings directed against those who cause pain to us or others.<sup>38</sup>

The so-called moral faculty, Grote says, is not ready-made in us, but grows. It involves both feeling and reason. We need reason to deal with new cases, and what reason settles on can be stated in general terms.<sup>39</sup> The ethical sentiment itself is social, involving reciprocity. It is essentially tied to our ideas of what spectators of our actions and dispositions feel, or would feel, in observing us. We think everyone can share in moral sentiment, since everyone has desires we can understand and everyone needs the help of others to satisfy them. The thought that I should treat others as I would wish them to treat me, combined with the idea of a "superintending and extraneous force . . . constitutes *ethical sentiment*."<sup>40</sup>

Grote elaborates: ethical sentiment involves feelings of obligations, of rights, and of a "common enforcing sanction." Obligations and rights are correlative. The belief in a sanction, real or not, is important for guaranteeing their reciprocity.<sup>41</sup> Performance of obligations is a means of acquiring a right to the esteem of others. Consciousness of having this right is self-esteem.<sup>42</sup> And "the desire of acquiring a right to the esteem of others . . . is the genuine ethical *motive*."<sup>43</sup> The highest ethical good is in fact awareness of having the esteem of others.<sup>44</sup>

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37 *Fragments*, 72–4.

38 *Fragments*, 78.

39 *Fragments*, 79–80.

40 *Fragments*, 84.

41 *Fragments*, 84–5.

42 *Fragments*, 86–8.

43 *Fragments*, 88.

44 *Fragments*, 89.

In discussing how we might argue with someone about an obligation, Grote gives us some idea of the evidence he can produce to show that a complex feeling, now experienced as one, is really composite. If I morally criticize someone, or console him for some wrong he has suffered, I argue by appealing to elements of the moral sentiment of which he has not been consciously aware but to which he responds when they are brought to his attention. This shows that the moral sentiment is complex.<sup>45</sup> And there is more to be said.

Considering how sympathy enters into the composition of the moral sentiment, Grote stresses our ability form the idea of a good in which we all share. This in turn leads us to feelings of moral approval and disapproval, which we always think are shared with others.<sup>46</sup> We also come to think of our obligation and rights as shared with others. And the rest of the moral vocabulary, Grote says, can be derived from these elements. Now in adults “the ethical sentiment involves more or less of a judgment of reason, the result of comparison in reflection” upon our experience.<sup>47</sup> In fact, Grote says, “Ethical sentiment properly so called is not feeling *alone*, like benevolence . . . anger . . . etc.—it is a rationalized *sentiment*—a process of feeling and reason combined.”<sup>48</sup> Perhaps surprisingly Grote gives reason another role. It must be brought in to correct our instincts, and in this connection he speaks of the “supervision and control of reason.”<sup>49</sup>

Finally, and showing the influence of Adam Smith, Grote reverts to a matter he has touched on earlier, the idea that we consider the supervising force outside us as an ideal spectator. What such an onlooker would feel about us is more important than what society actually feels now.<sup>50</sup> We form from this idea the more general idea of the reaction to us of ideally informed and sensitive observers; and so we come to the thought that disputes among us should be adjudicated by a principle we can all share.<sup>51</sup>

The remaining essays are about Aristotle. Had they been discovered earlier, his editor says, they would have been included in Grote’s book about him.<sup>52</sup> “The Ethics of Aristotle” is largely expository, with occasional critical remarks. He notes that Aristotle would have rejected the idea of a moral sense or intui-

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45 *Fragments*, 91–3.

46 *Fragments*, 100–1.

47 *Fragments*, 105.

48 *Fragments*, 106.

49 *Fragments*, 117.

50 *Fragments*, 121–3.

51 *Fragments*, 124.

52 *Fragments*, vi.

ting power.<sup>53</sup> He criticizes Aristotle for failing to provide any principle for settling disputes about morality. The doctrine of the mean is no help here, nor is the appeal to "the prudent man," as Aristotle does not tell us what principle that person uses.<sup>54</sup> Nor does he tell us precisely what final end or highest good is. And this is "the grand and fundamental defect in Aristotle's theory of ethics."<sup>55</sup>

Aristotle sometimes comes close to asserting that the happiness of all is the final end, thus moving beyond a concern for the happiness of the individual agent. Grote here again stresses the importance of distinguishing the good of the individual and the good of all as ends. But Aristotle cannot tell us what happiness is without first telling us what virtue is, since he has said that happiness comes from virtue.<sup>56</sup> His analogy of virtue with particular skills or crafts suggests again that Aristotle should have seen that the good of society is the appropriate highest good; but he does not come to this conclusion. And "until this want of a standard or measure is supplied, it is clear that the treatise of Aristotle is defective in a most essential point."<sup>57</sup>

Grote's discussions, in the fifth essay, of Aristotle on the virtues, and on moral psychology, are almost entirely expository. So too are his summaries of Aristotle on voluntary and involuntary actions and on the moral virtue of justice. The remaining essay is a brief sketch of Aristotle's *Politics*, which sheds no special light on Grote's own views.

What are we to make of Grote's approaches to a systematic moral philosophy? Associationism has not been taken seriously as science for a long time. Detailed criticism of it here would be out of place. But two problems with it may be mentioned. First, on the associationist view no one can have more than one set of data—the thinker's own. Our sensations and feelings are private. No one can observe another person's sensations or have another's feelings. But no observational science—and that is what the associationists thought they were giving us—can be built on such a limited data base. Second, associationism relies on the idea that impressions or sensations are simply "given." They come to each of us as 'red' or 'sweet' or 'painful' or 'approval' and they require no interpretation to be taken as such. We need only to introspect

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53 *Fragments*, 134.

54 *Fragments*, 163–4.

55 *Fragments*, 166.

56 *Fragments*, 169–7.

57 *Fragments*, 174.

to know what the simple sensations are. But the notion that there are simple givens in experience has long been attacked by philosophers as indefensible.<sup>58</sup>

Must we then simply reject Grote's views as wholly unwarranted? No, because we can look at them in a somewhat different way. For the associationists, ideas, whether simple or complex, are the meanings of words. We can take Grote and the other associationists to be seeking analytical accounts of the meanings of key terms in psychological and moral discourse. Since the terms are in public use, everyone who speaks the language knows at least implicitly what they mean. Each of us can check proposed analyses of meanings against our pre-theoretical understanding of the terms. Twentieth-century English-language philosophers have given a great deal of effort to explicating moral language. From a contemporary standpoint it looks as if Grote did a better job than James Mill at spelling out the meanings of moral terms. Thus he was right in stressing the importance of the point, which James Mill had not noted, that if we make a moral judgment about one specific case we are committed by the meanings of the moral terms to applying it to all relevantly similar cases. But Grote did not explore the matter sufficiently, nor did he notice the difficulties involved in the purely empiricist analyses he offered.

Grote's ethical writings were published in 1876, too late to have any effect on Victorian moral philosophy. Alexander Bain's *The Emotions and the Will* (1859) gives a much more complex associationist account of morality and the moral feelings than James Mill had given. It superseded Mill's *Analysis* in later discussions.<sup>59</sup> The chief historical interest of Grote's earlier moral essays is their showing that by the time he began writing his *History of Greece* he had worked out his own version of utilitarianism and was equipped with a standpoint from which to evaluate the philosophers who came to concern him.

Grote's relatively few critical remarks about philosophy in the *History of Greece* and his somewhat more numerous assessments of philosophical views in *Plato and the other Companions of Sokrates* make this evident. When Grote in the *History* says, of Greek views of punishment, "Every age has its own standard of feeling for measuring what is a proper intensity of punishment" we recognize his theory about variations in moral opinion from one society to another.<sup>60</sup> And when he says "I recognize no merit in self-denial unless in so

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58 The attack goes back to Wittgenstein. See Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception, and Reality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963). For a substantial discussion see Robert B. Brandom, *Making it Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

59 Grote himself admired the book: see *Plato*, vol. 2, 603–4 n.

60 Grote, *History of Greece* (London: John Murray, 1862), vol. 4, 507.

far as the self-denying person becomes thereby the instrument of increased security and happiness of others or to himself—or unless it be conducive to the formation of a character of which such is the general result” we can see this as more than a passing comment.<sup>61</sup> Like his preference for Protagoras over Socrates for making the good of all more important than the good of the individual it is anchored in Grote's attachment to utilitarianism.<sup>62</sup>

In *Plato* there are well over a dozen passages in which Grote's own utilitarian positions are in play. A few examples must suffice. In an important footnote Grote distances himself—correctly—from John Stuart Mill's well-known claim that Socrates was a utilitarian. He praises Mill for seeing that the utilitarian holds the greatest good to be “not the greatest happiness of the agent himself alone, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether. So that,” Grote continues, “we cannot with exactness call the doctrine of Sokrates, in his conversation with Protagoras, ‘the theory of Utilitarianism,’ as Mr. Mill calls it” in his 1863 *Utilitarianism*.<sup>63</sup>

There are several points at which Grote criticizes Plato for failing to see that the highest good is the greatest well-being or happiness of the whole. For example, Grote devotes several pages to explaining that Plato sees the virtue of justice as entirely self-regarding and ignoring the happiness of others. Plato, Grote says, has been complimented for opposing the so-called “selfish theory of morals”—a term used scornfully of utilitarianism by its nineteenth-century critics—but in fact “Plato's theory is essentially self-regarding . . .”<sup>64</sup> Plato evades any clear statement of the highest good except in the *Protagoras*. He there has Socrates say that the good “is at bottom identical with pleasure” and that “the object of intelligence . . . is pleasures and pains . . . to secure to ourselves as much as possible of the former and to escape as much as possible of the latter.”<sup>65</sup> Sokrates in the *Protagoras* sees the need for a definite standard for settling moral disputes, but his view is incomplete. Admitting that amount of pleasure gives such a standard he nonetheless holds that it is each agent's own pleasure that matters. But this view “requires to be enlarged” to comprehend “the pleasures and pains . . . of others besides the agent himself.”<sup>66</sup> And Grote adds a footnotes referring to John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*.

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61 *History*, vol. 6, 77, n.

62 *History*, vol. 6, 80–81.

63 Grote, *Plato*, vol. 2, 83, n. 1.

64 *Plato*, vol. 3, 132.

65 *Plato*, vol. 1, 541.

66 *Plato*, vol. 2, 82–3; cf. 123.



Grote also works in a criticism of Plato for ignoring one of his own favorite points, the reciprocity of rights and duties. Any theorist must admit that each individual is both agent and patient, having duties as well as rights. "He is required to be just towards others, they are required to be just towards him. . . . Whoever theorises upon society . . . must accept this reciprocity as a fundamental condition." But Plato is not clear about it.<sup>67</sup>

It is striking that though an admirer of John Stuart Mill Grote makes no critical comment on Plato's views about women—neither the then surprising claim that qualified women should share the rule equally with qualified men, nor his generally disparaging remarks about them.<sup>68</sup> But Grote's own commitment to utilitarianism is not left in doubt. The subjective fact, Grote says, implied by anyone who approves of an act as virtuous is an inner sentiment of approval which each person knows by feeling it. Plato assumes that there is also an objective common property "to which the sentiment refers." What can this be? The principle of Utility, Grote answers. "I mean that principle which points out Happiness and Unhappiness, not merely of the agent himself, but also of others . . . as the standard to which [the sentiments of approbation and disapprobation] refer."<sup>69</sup>

John Stuart Mill was a philosopher who knew Greek well and wrote knowledgeably about Greek history. George Grote was a historian who knew philosophy well and used the knowledge pervasively in writing his histories. If Grote's contribution to history has not remained alive as long as Mill's to philosophy, he might still be taken as a model for those aspiring to increase our knowledge of Greek antiquity.

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67 *Plato*, vol. 3, 136–7.

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# Appendix

## *George Grote on James Mill's "Government"*

*Transcribed and edited by Antis Loizides*

In 1820 James Mill published a short essay on "Government" in the *Supplement* to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.<sup>1</sup> Upon its publication, Mill's friends enthusiastically congratulated him on serving the "good cause," i.e., the promotion of the idea of proper government, without giving it the appearance of a tract on reform.<sup>2</sup> Although it was not as openly radical such as Bentham's *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* (1817) had been, it came to be regarded "as a masterpiece of political wisdom" by the younger Benthamite radicals.<sup>3</sup> It is well known that the cult status which the essay earned in the 1820s eventually led to a devastating critique by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1829, shaking the confidence and cogency of the "Philosophic Radicals."

Sometime in the early 1820s, George Grote prepared a short summary of Mill's essay. Mill's "Government" is often read either as a covertly radical document or a panegyric for the wise leadership of the middle class;<sup>4</sup> Grote's summary seems to provide evidence of the first reading rather than the second. However, there is no evidence on either the dating of or Grote's intentions in writing this piece. On December 7th, 1822 Grote wrote a letter to Arthur Gregory "explaining and confirming the impressions made by Mill's art. 'Government,'"<sup>5</sup> but it is not clear whether Grote intentionally compiled this summary as part of that letter—Grote had, after all, the habit of making summaries of works by a variety of authors. Still, considering that by 1822 Grote had already published his *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform* (1821), the letter to Gregory could suggest that Grote did not regard his pamphlet to be a longer version of Mill's essay—a frequent claim made with regard to Grote's *Statement*.<sup>6</sup>

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1 James Mill, "Government" (1820), *Supplement to the IV, V, and VI Editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ed. M. Napier (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1824): vol. 4 (part 2): 491–505. Additional references to this work will be given in parenthesis, by section and paragraph number (in Latin and Arabic numbers respectively).

2 D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 27 July 1820, in *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, ed. P. Sraffa, 11 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004 [or. ed. 1951–1977]), vol. 8, 211. See also, D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 30 Aug. 1823, in *ibid.* vol. 9, 375.

3 See John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (1873), in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J.M. Robson et al., 33 vols. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1963–1991), vol. 1, 107.

4 See further, William Thomas, "The 'Essay on Government' and the Movement for Reform," *Historical Journal* 12, no. 2 (1969): 249–84.

5 Harriet Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote* (London: John Murray, 1873), 49.

6 See further, *infra*, chapter 2.

In the text transcribed below, references to Mill's "Government" are provided whenever necessary in footnotes, even though the ideas and the conceptual apparatus within Grote's manuscript could justify multiple references to various works. At the same time, Grote's punctuation and spelling have been preserved, but deleted text has been suppressed.<sup>7</sup>

*Short abstract of the article—Government—in the Supplement to the British Encyclopaedia—written by Mr Mill.*<sup>8</sup>

1. Government is a means to an end—to the attainment of the greatest possible happiness of the greatest number.<sup>9</sup>
2. The objects of desire, out of which human happiness is chiefly moulded, are produced by nature in limited qualities, & can only be attained by labour. This creates a temptation to the strong to extort by force these objects from the weak. But it may be assumed (as susceptible by proof) that the aggregate of general happiness is smaller during the existence of this robbery from one part of the society towards the other, than it would be if the fruits of each individual's labour would be secured to himself. Consequently it is the end of government to ensure to each member the produce of his labours, deducting merely such a portion of it as may be absolutely necessary to carry this end into effect.<sup>10</sup>
3. Having now stated, in a more specific language, the object which Government is intended to bring about we proceed to the means which it employs. In order to prevent the strong from robbing & encroaching on the weak, a degree of power must be found still greater than that which the former possesses.<sup>11</sup>
4. Power must be vested in some person or persons. That portion of power which is requisite for the business of Government may be distributed into those classes, according to the number of persons in whose hands it resides. It may be exercised either by the whole community, or by a few persons, or by one person.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Also, number 8 appeared twice in the manuscript, here the sequence was restored.

<sup>8</sup> Senate House Library MS429/3 ff. 229–236.

<sup>9</sup> Mill, "Government," 491 (I.1; III.2).

<sup>10</sup> Mill, "Government," 491–2 (III.6, 8, 11–12). Grote's second point may be considered an explanatory note rather than a summary of Mill's third section on the ends of Government. Grote's assumption on the comparison of aggregates of happiness and the cost of protection of individuals are not explicitly stated by Mill. Grote and Mill differed on what the common good consists of—for Mill, it referred to the aggregate of individual interests; for Grote, it referred to what was left from a process of subtracting those aspects of individual interests which are mutually contradictory (see *infra* chapter 2).

<sup>11</sup> Mill, "Government," 492 (IV.1–5).

<sup>12</sup> Mill, "Government," 492 (V.1).

5. On examining more closely these three supposable means of bringing into action that power which is requisite for the business of Government, we quickly discover that the former,<sup>A</sup> or Democracy, is absolutely impracticable.<sup>13</sup> Our attention is therefore confined to the two last, or to aristocracy<sup>14</sup> & monarchy.
6. Whatever temptation the strong originally had to rob the weak, the same temptation will the possessors of aristocratical or monarchical power have to despoil those who are subject to them. The very reason which rendered it necessary to entrust these powers to a king or an aristocracy, makes it certain that they will pursue their own interest at the expense of their subjects. By this means, since the king or the aristocracy must unquestionably be entrusted with a greater degree of power than the strong who they are destined to coerce & as the power of both will inevitably be employed in the promotion of views hostile to those of the happiness of the community, it seems that the object which government was established is more distant & unattainable than ever.<sup>15</sup> *Quis custodiet ipsos Custodes?*<sup>B16</sup>
7. If power be entrusted to a king & an aristocracy combined, the same principles which would lead each of them, if invested with separate authority, to pursue its own ends to the prejudice of the rest of the community, will now render an union between the two, for the promotion of the combined interests of both, an infallible result. The one will not be a check on the other, except in order to prevent encroaching on itself. Both king & aristocracy will mutually connive at the proceedings of each other towards the body of the nation, in order that the same forbearances may be extended to either when convenient. This consequence will be certain if neither the king can subdue the aristocracy, nor the aristocracy subdue the king. For it is by this union & mutual connivance that each will procure the largest share of wealth & power and by the very first

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13 Mill, "Government," 492 (VI.1–2). Mill gives two reasons why democracy cannot be put into practice: a. the business of government would take too much of the community's time, making it impossible to work—and, thus, defeating the purpose of government, i.e., to protect the produce of one's labour.—; b. calm and effective deliberation is impossible in large bodies of individuals. In note A, Grote refers partly to the second reason.

14 End of text at MS429/3 230.

15 Grote draws here from Mill, "Government," 493–6 (VII and VIII). While Grote repeats Mill's point that those with power will abuse it, Mill made an additional "ethological" point associated with the intellectual power of the aristocracy—who, without the need for labour, have not developed their intellectual powers.

16 This well-known Latin phrase does not appear in James Mill's essay; interestingly the younger Mill does use this phrase in discussing the proper function of representative bodies. See John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 19, 426.

principle of government it appeared, that those who possess power would employ it to strife & oppress those who had not.<sup>17</sup>

8. It appears therefore, that we cannot, by mixing together Monarchy & Aristocracy, any more than by the establishment<sup>18</sup> of either singly, produce a result by which the end of government may be attained; [t]hat is to say, we cannot by these means create a quantity of power, sufficient for the purpose, which shall be employed for the happiness of the community.<sup>19</sup>
9. <sup>C</sup>A good government is therefore unattainable, unless some means can be devised of ensuring the direction of these powers, which are created for the purpose of restraining the encroachments of the strong. But these powers cannot be wielded by a very large number, or by the whole community. And when they are confided to any small number, we have seen that such a body will, if permitted, infallibly misuse them. In order therefore to produce good government, the grand difficulty is, to check & counteract the natural tendency, which would induce the possessors of power to employ it in a mode fatal to the happiness of the community.<sup>20</sup>
10. If it were possible that individuals could be endued with a power in its nature such, that it would remain in their hands no longer than they should it employ it properly, & that the period of its misapplication should likewise be that of its cessation, this power would prove an effectual safeguard to the community. For this purpose two conditions are requisite. That the individual shall hold power only for a limited period; [a]nd that, after being surrendered, it shall be resumed only at the will & diction of the community, or of some class of persons having the same interest as the community, as signified by the process of election. If the benefits which he can derive from abusing his power are confined to a limited period, & if he is certain of being exposed to public censure & obloquy, as the consequence of them, at the end of that limit, the motives to misgovernment will not operate upon his mind with sufficient force to direct his actions. Frequent elections therefore, by a body of persons who have the same interests as the nation<sup>21</sup> afford the only mode of creating a power on which we may safely rely, as a check upon the misdirection of all the powers in the state.<sup>22</sup>

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17 End of text at MS429/3 232.

18 Mill, "Government," 496 (IX.9).

19 Mill, "Government," 497 (X.4–5).

20 Mill, "Government," 497 (X.5).

21 End of text at MS429/3 234.

22 In discussing Mill's views on representation and the doctrine of checks—trying to identify the interests of those who hold the power with those who do not, Grote points out three requirements for good government: a. short parliaments (Mill, "Government," 498 (XI.II));



11. With regard to the electing body, it has already been stated to require this one necessary property, viz: an interest identical with that of the whole community. This can only be secured by taking a number sufficiently large. Any small number will have an interest distinct from the body of the nation; & the objections to entrusting with power men whom the small numbers elect, will be the same as the objections to entrusting it with the small number itself.<sup>23</sup>
12. Different modes have been proposed for obtaining an elective body whose interests shall be similar to those of the nation. Qualification of age, of property, & of profession have been supported. Perhaps the first of these is the least exceptionable. We must only keep in mind that whatever qualification we select, it must be such as will embrace a number of persons sufficiently large to have an interest identical with that of the whole nation. Any qualification which will afford such a result would be admissible.<sup>24</sup>
13. It is evident that the preceding remarks on the mode of attaining good Government involves this supposition, that the community itself (or a number of persons sufficiently large to have the same interests as the community) is capable of choosing fit representatives. Should they be incapable of exercising this function, there is no remedy for misgovernment. And we must be compelled to choose either those evils which arise from the distinct interests of the aristocracy; or those which arise from the mistaken notions of the people.<sup>25</sup>

### [Grote's Notes]

<sup>A</sup> The community at large is here meant as exercising power, which is impossible because no large body can ever act or perform any business. When it is said to be impossible that the community should exercise power, we mean with reference to the end in view; viz: the happiness of the whole. We mean that they will be sure to exercise it so badly, as not to promote this end.<sup>26</sup>

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b. large elective body (Mill, "Government," 499–500 (XII.6–7)); c. public exposure of parliamentary misconduct (Mill, "Government," 499 (XI.16–17)). Mill was clear about the extent of neither of the first two, and only hinted at the last.

<sup>23</sup> Mill, "Government," 499 (XII.6).

<sup>24</sup> Mill, "Government," 500 (XII.10–12). Interestingly, Grote does not comment on Mill's discussion of the representation of group or local interests in the House of Commons, which forms the bulk of his own argument in his *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1821). See further, *infra*, chapter 2.

<sup>25</sup> Mill, "Government," 503–4 (XVI.5–7). End of text at ms429/3 236.

<sup>26</sup> End of text at ms429/3 229.

<sup>B</sup> Hobbes & the Economists considered that a king or an aristocracy might be satisfied with a limited quantity of wealth & power, & would then leave to the people the rest. In objection to this the following consideration should serve.

Human beings are not a passive substance, & do not willingly part with the objects of desire. Whoever therefore is inclined to plunder or maltreat them, will be constantly under apprehensions of resistance. They will not consent to this sort of extortion unless under the influence of terror. In order to keep in action this terror, a king or an aristocracy must employ a number of agents, to whom they must impart a share of the plunder. It is therefore not the governors alone who are to be satiated, but all the instruments whom they make use of in creating terror. The governors & their agents will likewise have favourites who are to be filled out of the public plunder. This consideration would be alone sufficient to shew, that a government can never be satisfied as long as it has any prospect of extracting more from the public. But it is not true, that in the appetite for wealth or power, there is in any individual a point of saturation, while he has the power of commanding more. The gratification of desire only leads to the formation of another. The obedience of nine millions of subjects will only make a king more offended, when the remaining 100,000 refuse to obey. Besides, when resistance is apprehended from any body of men, & terror is necessary to be kept in action upon their mind, the oppressor will deprive them even of more than he himself might desire, because whatever he left to them might be employed as a means of resistance against himself.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>C</sup> It may be asked, will not public opinion act as a sufficient check to prevent misgovernment? It appears however that public opinion is a check both incomplete in itself, & liable to act, on many occasions, in the most disadvantageous mode in which a check can act.

Public opinion may act in checking a bad government by two different channels; 1. In so far as the governors dread blame; 2. In so far as they dread resistance.

In so far as the governors dread blame, it acts as a very incomplete check. Nothing is more clear than that a powerful governor will always be environed with a herd of interested persons from which he will hear nothing but opinions favourable to his views. If ever opinions of a contrary nature meet his ear, they will be represented as the height of madness or of quilt. The circle in which a king or an aristocracy move, constitute the persons whose applause they covet, & of that applause they are always perfectly secure. The worse & more powerful a government is, the less will it value the praise or censure of the people at large.

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27 Mill, "Government," 493–5 (VIII.7–22). End of folio MS429/3 231. Grote's note here is both a summary as well as a clarification of James Mill's thesis, in as much as the historian defines Mill's rather abstract discussion on power and the need for terror in terms of differentiating between rulers and their agents.

In so far the governors dread resistance, the check is partly disadvantageous, partly incomplete. How very improbable is it that governors should perceive the exact & delicate point at which public opinion will endure no more, & is fully prepared for resistance? And if they should remain unconscious of the mass of public dissatisfaction & should still persevere in misapplying their powers, the only ulterior check is physical force. The use of this last & most desperate check is attended so much misery, that a people will submit to very great oppression before they can be persuaded to employ it. Hence arises likewise another deficiency in the check of public opinion, that if the governors choose to disregard it, they may do so to a very great extent before the people can be persuaded to have recourse to resistance. In order to be complete, a check should<sup>28</sup> be competent to arrest the progress of misgovernment in its earlier stages. But this check, we see, can only destroy it when it has reached a very great height, & can then only extinguish it by a process replete with misery.

The dispersion of the members of the community, the difficulty of communicating the sentiments of each part of it to the rest, & the apprehension which every individual feels of declaring his opinion loudly & decidedly, which he knows not what others feel, occasions another point of deficiency in the check of public opinion. In order to be permanently strong, a body must be few, or else they cannot combine or act together. This will likewise form another reason why it is probable that a government will push on its oppressions, regardless of public opinion, until at last resistance breaks out. For it may be easy for the governors to crash resistance at any single point, & the exertions of the people will need to be long & harmful before they can ultimately be successful.

Besides this, one of the most important modes of restraining the governing powers is, by enacting laws which they are to execute. But public opinion is unable to do this. In this respect also it forms an incomplete check.<sup>29</sup>

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28 End of text at MS429/3 233.

29 End of text at MS429/3 235. In discussing the inefficiency of public opinion, Grote responds to an objection to Mill's discussion, i.e., that Mill ignored the influence public opinion has on the conduct of representatives (which would mean that neither short parliaments are needed nor a large elective body). For example, David Ricardo often criticized the elder Mill for being "unjustly severe" in refusing to acknowledge the influence of "public opinion" as a counteracting force on the actions of public men. See, D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 30 Aug. 1815; 25 Oct. 1815; 30 Dec. 1817; 27 July 1820; in Saffa, *Ricardo*, vol. 6, 263–64, 310–11; vol. 7, 236–37; vol. 8, 211.

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